This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

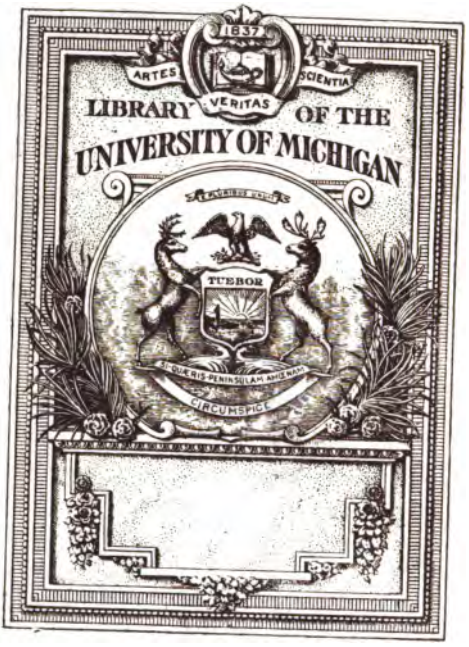
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

A 00396 165
University of Michigan – BUHR

URNING OF GRIGGSBY

IRVING BACHELLER

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

828
B121tu

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE TURNING OF GRIGGSBY

Digitized by Google

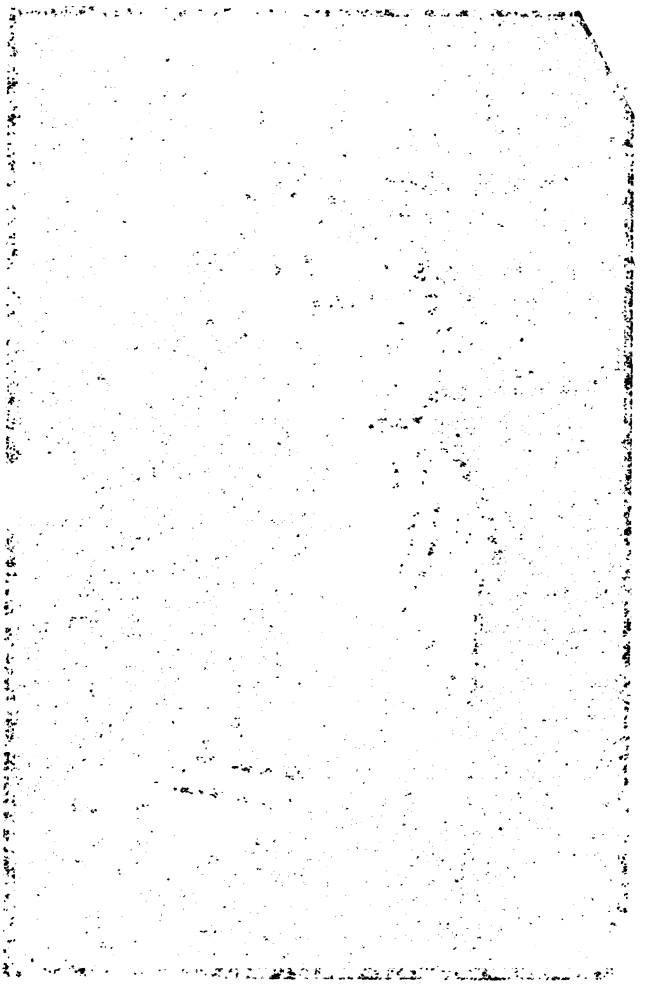
BOOKS BY
IRVING BACHELLER

THE TURNING OF GRIGGSBY. Ill'd.	12mo *net*	$1.00
CHARGE IT. Ill'd	12mo *net*	1.00
KEEPING UP WITH LIZZIE. Ill'd.	Post 8vo *net*	1.00
EBEN HOLDEN. Ill'd	Post 8vo	1.50
	Édition de Luxe	2.00
EBEN HOLDEN'S LAST DAY A-FISHING .	16mo	.50
DRI AND I. Ill'd	Post 8vo	1.50
DARRELL OF THE BLESSED ISLES. Ill'd	Post 8vo	1.50
VERGILIUS	Post 8vo	1.35
SILAS STRONG	Post 8vo	1.50
THE HAND-MADE GENTLEMAN . .	Post 8vo	1.50
IN VARIOUS MOODS. Poems .	Post 8vo *net*	1.00

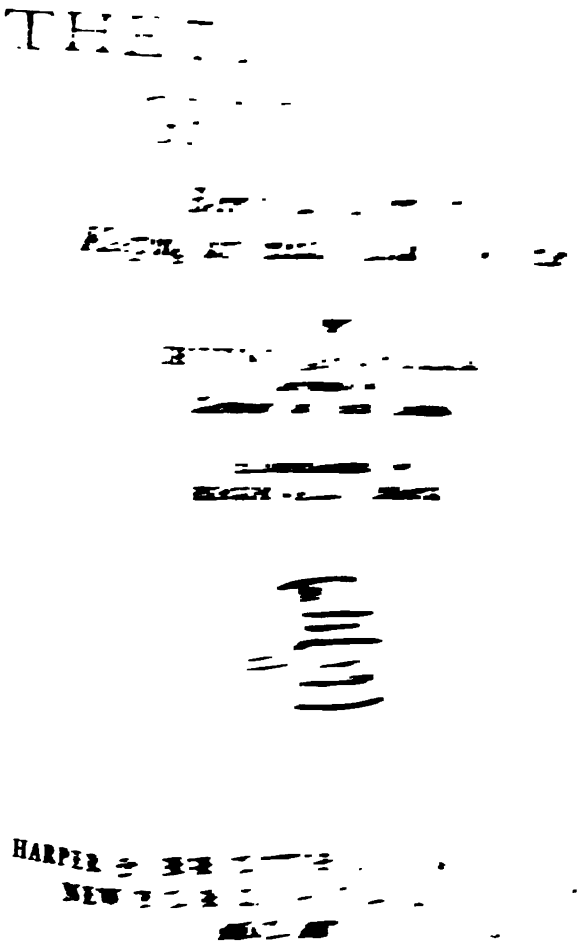
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS, N. Y.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google



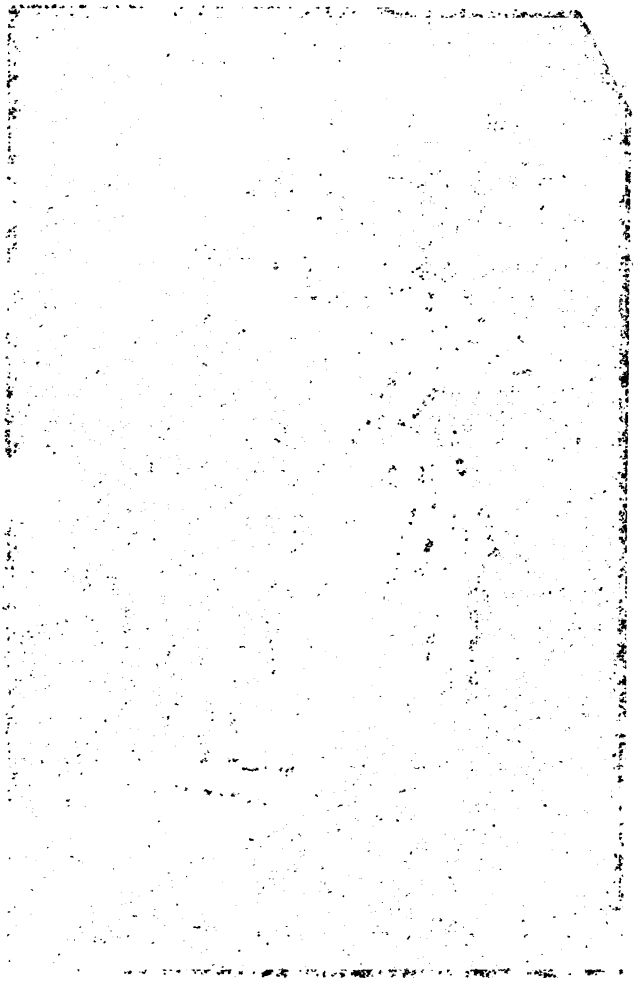
Digitized by Google

[See page 139

"I DO NOT REMEMBER WHAT I SAID, BUT IT WAS SATISFACTORY TO HER"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



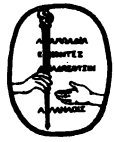
Digitized by Google

THE TURNING OF GRIGGSBY

Being a Story of Keeping up with Dan'l Webster

BY
IRVING BACHELLER
AUTHOR OF
Keeping up with Lizzie

ILLUSTRATED BY
REGINALD BIRCH



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXIII

Digitized by Google

COPYRIGHT, 1913, BY HARPER & BROTHERS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLISHED APRIL, 1913

C-N

Digitized by Google

ILLUSTRATIONS

"I DO NOT REMEMBER WHAT I SAID, BUT IT WAS SATISFACTORY TO HER" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"I EXPECT HIM TO TRANSPORT ME TO THE GOAL OF AFFLUENCE" . . . . . *Facing p.* 32

GILES WAS AN EPIC FIGURE . . . . . " 88

"*EDITOR* SMEAD REFUSES THE REQUEST OF *LAWYER* PIKE, AND SUGGESTS THAT HE AND HORSE-KILLER McMANN SHOULD JOIN HANDS AND JUMP INTO THE AIR AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE" . . . . . " 124

357821

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE TURNING OF GRIGGSBY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE TURNING OF GRIGGSBY

CHAPTER I

"IT was a wonderful thing to see the way he rose and stepped forward, and stood before the people, and their cheering was like the shout of winds in a forest." So spake our old schoolmaster, Appleton Hall, as he told us of Daniel Webster and the famous Bunker Hill address.

His black eyes glowed as he went on: "There was something grand in the look of the man, for he was tall and strong-built, and stood straight as an arrow, and his soul was in his face. A godlike and

Digitized by Google

solemn face it was, like that of St. Paul, as I think of him after reading the twelfth chapter of Romans. He had a wonderful authority in his face, and what a silence it commanded after that first greeting had passed, and before he had opened his mouth to speak. My eyes grew dim as I looked at him. He wore a blue coat, with bright brass buttons on it, and a buff waistcoat, and his great black-crested, swarthy head was nobly poised above his white linen. His dark eyes were deep set under massive brows. Now comes the first sentence of that immortal speech. His voice is like a deep-toned bell as he speaks with great deliberation the opening words: 'This uncounted multitude before me and around me proves the feeling which the occasion has excited.'

"Near him, and looking into his face, were two hundred veterans of the Revolution, some in their old uniforms, many crippled by wounds and bent by infirmities.

Digitized by Google

"It was a mighty thing to hear when he looked into their faces and said: 'Venerable men, you have come down to us from a former generation. Heaven has bountifully lengthened out your lives that you might behold this joyous day.'

"Well I remember how, when he had ceased, the people were still for half a moment dreading to break the spell. Suddenly they were like a sea in a wind, although many held their places and were loath to go, and lingered awhile talking of the speech, and I among them. And I saw the vast crowd slowly break and go drifting away by thousands, and I fancied that some of the men held their heads a bit higher, and that certain of those near me were trying the Websterian tone. Since then that tone and that manner have become as familiar as the flag. At the inn I heard much talk of the great man — idle words which one may hear to this day and be none the wiser, but possibly much the worse for it.

Digitized by Google

"Some said that he always took a tumbler of brandy before he made a speech; but I observed that these gossipers had the odor of rum about them. There was, too, a relish of Me and Dan'l in all their talk. However, the tradition has come down to us, and had its effect in the life of this village, and of others like it. However well you may do, young men, there will be those seeking ever to pull you down to their level, and if they cannot move your character they will attack your reputation."

I have often thought of these words of the schoolmaster. They showed me some of the curious monkey traits of man. Through them I began to know Griggsby, to which I had lately come. I suddenly discovered that I was living in the Websterian age, and a high-headed, reverberating time it was.

But, first, let me introduce myself. People have always called me "Havelock, of Stillwater," though I am plain Uriel Have-

Digitized by Google

lock. I have little in my purse, but there are treasures in my memory, and I am trying here to give them to the world with all my joyous thoughts about them and never a feeling of ill will.

I write of that time when the fame of Webster was on every lip, although his soul had passed some twenty years before. All through the North, from the Atlantic to far frontiers beyond the Mississippi, men in beaver hats and tall collars were playing Daniel Webster. They dressed as he had dressed, and had his grand manners, while their diaphragms were often sorely strained in an effort to deliver his deep, resounding tones. The peace of most farms and villages was disturbed by Websterian shouts of ready-made patriotism from the lips of sires and sons.

Webster was a demi-god, in the imagination of the people, with a voice of thunder and an eye to threaten and command. Countless anecdotes celebrated his wit, his

Digitized by Google

eloquence, and his supposed capacity for stimulants. He was not the only man of that period who suffered from the inventive talent of his successors. Powers of indulgence and of reckless wit were conferred upon them in a way to excite the wonder and emulation of the weak. Daniel Webster especially had been a martyr to such flattery. He never deserved it. Wearied by his great labors, he may now and then have resorted to stimulants; but his reputation as an absorber of strong drink is a baseless fabrication. Those brimming cups of his have been mostly filled with fiction.

Nevertheless, he was handed down to posterity as a product of genius and stimulation—a sublime toper. In that capacity he filled a long-felt need of those engaged in the West Indian trade and the inn-keepers. In those days, it should be remembered, an inn-keeper was a man of some account. With that imaginary trait of

Digitized by Google

greatness at the fore, the resounding Websterian age began.

When still a boy I left home and went to live in Griggsby. It was a better place to die in; but that does not matter, since, going to Griggsby to live, I succeeded. At school among my fellow-students was a boy I greatly envied. Bright and handsome, as a scholar he was at one end of the class, and I at the other; and that was about the way we stood in local prophecy. I wonder when people will learn that scholarship should not be the first, or even the second, aim of a schooling. For it is not what the mind takes in that makes the man, but what the mind gives out; it is not the quantity of one's memories, but the quality of one's thoughts. Character makes the man and also the community. It was character that made Griggsby, and Griggsby in turn made characters.

Old John Henry Griggs was the first

Digitized by Google

sample of its finished product. He had been keeping up with Webster, as he thought, ever since he left school, and in that effort was both a drunkard and a "distinguished statesman." Though he modestly disclaimed these great accomplishments, a majority of his fellow-citizens conferred them upon him. The result was a public peril.

Among the students at school was a girl that I loved. Her name was Florence Dunbar, which had a fine sound, while mine, like many other names of Yankee choosing, was a help to humility and a discouragement to pride. Then, again, Florence was rich and beautiful, while I was poor and plain. She had come to Griggsby from the West, where her father had gone in his youth and had made a fortune. They had sent her and her brother back to the old home to be educated. I had come to Griggsby from a stumpy farm on the edge of the forest ten miles away.

Digitized by Google

Now, this plainness of mine, I soon discovered, was largely due to my mother's looking-glass, aided and abetted by untiring efforts on the part of all the family to keep me humble. I often wondered how it came about that I was the only one in the house whose looks were a misfortune. It did not seem just that I should be singled out to carry all the ugliness for that generation of Havelocks. I would not have minded a generous share, but it seemed to me that I was the only one who had been hit by the avalanche. One day I confided to my elder brother this overwhelming sense of facial deformity. To my surprise, he assured me that I had a face to be proud of, while his had kept him awake of nights and caused him to despise himself. That exchange of views increased our confidence in ourselves a little, if not our knowledge. By and by a neighbor moved into that lonely part of the world where we were living. I shall never forget the day I went

Digitized by Google

to play with the strange children, and especially the moment when I stood before their looking-glass combing my hair. To my joy and astonishment, I saw a new face, of better proportions and smaller defects, and with only one twist in it. I tarried so long at the glass that the mother of the family smiled and said that she feared I was a rather foolish boy.

When I went home I proceeded with as little delay as possible to my mother's looking-glass, where I found the long, gnarled face of old with its magnified freckles. I wondered at this difference of opinion regarding my personal appearance between the two glasses, but with noble patriotism decided that my mother's mirror was probably right. As a discourager of sinful pride that gilt-bound, oval looking-glass was a great success. It lengthened the face and enlarged every defect; it crumpled the nose and put sundry twists in the countenance. There have been two

Digitized by Google

ministers and three old maids in our family, and in my opinion that looking-glass did it. Of course, other things helped, but the glass was mainly responsible. I myself would have been a minister if it had not fallen to my lot to break a yoke of steers, and that saved me. In the course of this task I acquired an accomplishment inconsistent with the life of a clergyman. I kept it long enough to trim the beech trees about my father's house, and it lasted through many calls to repentance. Then, too, my father discovered that I had an unusual talent for lying. He did his best to destroy it, and would have succeeded if he had not appealed to the wrong side of me—a side which never had much capacity for absorbing information. Now as the cow jumped over the moon in my story book, I could not understand why it should be thought wicked for her to jump over the stable in my conversation. But my story lacked verisimilitude. It wouldn't do. Indeed, for

Digitized by Google

a time I felt as if the cow had landed on me. It was a great monopoly that controlled the output of the human imagination, those days, and while most of my elders were in it, as I knew, they wouldn't give me a chance. I persevered. It cost me great pain, but I persevered. My father lost heart and consulted with the Rev. Appleton Hall, who was principal of the village school at Griggsby, and he undertook to make a man of me. That was how I came to go there, and to live in a small room rudely furnished by my father, where I did my own cooking. The school principal began to call me "Havelock of Stillwater," Stillwater being our township in the woods, and others followed his example. Mr. Hall did not waste any time in trying to convince me that lying produced pain. I knew that. He took the positive side of the proposition and soon taught me that the truth pays.

In the main, the looking-glasses of Griggs-

Digitized by Google

by were kind to me, and the weight of evidence seemed to indicate that my face was not a misfortune, after all. Still, I had no conceit of it.

The big buildings of the town, the high hats and "lofty" manners of the great men, excited my wonder and admiration. At first they were beyond my understanding, and did not even amuse me.

I had a profound sense of inferiority to almost every one I met, and especially to Florence Dunbar. I suppose it was a part of that ample gift of humility which had been pounded into my ancestors and passed on to me with the aid of the beech rod, the looking-glass, and the shrill voice of Elder Whitman in the schoolhouse. For a long time my love for Florence was a secret locked in my own breast.

Summer had returned to the little village in the hills, and one Saturday in June I gathered wild flowers in the fields and took them to Florence. She received them with

Digitized by Google

a cry of joy, and asked me to show her where they grew; so away we went together into the meadows by a wayside, and, when our hands were full, sat under a tree to look at them. Then, poor lad! I opened my heart to her, and I remember it was in full bloom. I shall never forget the sweet, girlish frankness with which she said:

"I'm sorry, but I cannot love you."

"I didn't think it would be possible," I said.

"Oh yes, it would be *possible*," she explained; "but, you see, I love another."

I remember well how her frankness hurt me. I turned away, and had trouble to breathe for a moment. She saw the effect of her words, and said, by way of comfort:

"But I think you're very, very nice; Henry likes you, too."

Henry was her brother and my chum at school.

"I wish you would tell me what to do

Digitized by Google

with him," she went on, after a moment. "He's drinking, and behind in his work, and I am terribly worried."

"It's nothing to worry about," I said, though not in perfect innocence. "All great men drink—it helps 'em stand the strain, I suppose."

"Havelock, you talk like a child," she answered. "These leading men are leading us in the wrong direction. You boys think that they are so wonderful you begin to take after them. Look at Ralph. He's going to the bad as fast as possible. I'd pack up and go home with Henry if—"

Her eyes filled with tears. I sat silent and full of shame, and quite aware of her secret. She loved Ralph Buckstone, the good-looking son of the great Colonel.

"You love him, don't you?" I said, sorrowfully.

She smiled at me through a spray of clover blossoms with cheeks as red as they, but made no answer.

Digitized by Google

At that moment Colonel Buckstone himself came galloping along on his big black horse, shotgun in hand, with two hounds at his heels. He pulled up with a knowing look, shook his head, and then rode away with only a wave of his hand.

Florence and I rose and walked along in silence for a while, then she said:

"I'm sorry for you, and I will never tell what you have told me, never."

"And I will never tell what you have told me," I said.

"I'm willing you should tell *him*," she answered. "He may as well know, even if he doesn't care."

Temptation beset me even then, but in those first months my natural innocence was like a shield. By and by I began to feel the weight of it, and to lighten the load a little. That wonderful comedy which was being enacted in the life around me had begun to excite my interest when I went home to work in the fields for the summer.

Digitized by Google

I returned to school in the autumn, a big swarthy youth of seventeen. Before the end of that year the first of these many adventures of mine opened the gate of a better life before me.

It was a day in December. Henry and Florence Dunbar, Ralph Buckstone, and I were skating on the lake. The ice was new, and bent a little under our feet as we flew, out on the glassy plain in pursuit of Florence, more daring and expert than the rest of us. The day was cloudless, and the smooth lake roof shone in the sunlight. An hour later we were returning, with Florence a hundred or more feet ahead of us, when I heard the snap of the breaking ice and saw her go down like a stone falling through a skylight. I skated straight for the break, and, taking a deep breath, crashed among the broken slabs of ice and down into cold, roaring water. My hand touched something, and I seized it—her coat, as I knew by the feeling. Then came that little fraction

Digitized by Google

of a minute in which one must do the right thing and do it quickly. I could see, of course, and could hear the shouts of the boys, the click of skates passing near, and the stir of the shattered ice. That saved us, that sound of the wavering ice. I made for it, got my hand through, and caught a shinny stick in the hands of Henry Dunbar, who was lying flat near the edge of the break. There we hung and lived until the boys came with a pole and got us out. Chilled? No. I was never so hot in my life until I began to feel the wind.

One day soon after that my father came into the village and said that I was to board at the house of Mr. Daniel W. Smead, have three square meals a day, and a room with four windows and a stove in it. Poor lad! I did not know until long after that Florence and Henry paid the bill. My father said that he had sold the big Wilkes mare and her foal, and I supposed that that accounted for his generosity.

Digitized by Google

Florence would have it that I had saved her life, although the truth is that if I had not gone down after her one of the other boys would have done so, I am sure, or she might even have reached the air alone. How she pitied me after that! Almost every day she tried to show me her gratitude with some little token—a flower, a tender word or look, or an invitation to supper. I loved her with all the steadfastness of the true-born Yankee, but it seemed to me now that my love was hopeless. I could never ask her to marry me, for how could she say no to me with all that burden of gratitude in her heart? How could I have got an honest answer if I had been unfair enough to ask it?

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

MR. DANIEL WEBSTER SMEAD had five children and a wife, who did all the work of the household. He was an auctioneer, a musician, and a horseman.

When I went to begin my life in his house, it was he who opened the door. He was coatless, collarless, and in dirty linen.

"I am Uriel Havelock," I said.

"Havelock of Stillwater," said he. "I salute you. How is your health?"

"Pretty good," I said.

"Walk right into the drawin'-room, an' draw yer jack knife an' go to whittlin' if ye want to."

The drawing-room wrung a smile from my sad face. It was the plainest of rooms, decorated with chromos, mottos in colored

Digitized by Google

yarns, and with faded wall paper. On the floor was a worn and shabby carpet; and some plain, wooden chairs; a haircloth sofa, with its antimacassar and crocheted cushion, completed the furnishings. The woodwork, the windows, and all the appointments of the room were noticeably clean. A ragged-looking Newfoundland dog came roaring in upon me.

"Leo, Leo, be still, or I'll subject you to punishment," said Mr. Smead.

"Is he full-blooded?" I asked.

"As full-blooded as Col. Sile Buckstone, an' that's sayin' a good deal."

"Good watch dog?"

"Sets an' watches the scenery all day."

He opened the stairway door and called: "Mrs. Smead! Oh, Mrs. Smead! A noble guest is under our battlements."

There was a sound of footsteps on the floor above, and in a moment a pale, weary woman, followed by three boys from seven to twelve years of age, each in patched

Digitized by Google

trousers, came down the stairway. The woman shook my hand and said that she was glad to see me, although I had never beheld a face so utterly joyless.

The master of the household kept up a running fire of talk. Addressing the children, he said:

"Dan'l, Rufus, Edward, salute the young gentleman." They had been named after the great orators Webster, Choate, and Everett.

As they timidly shook my hand their father observed: "These boys have ascended from Roger Williams, Remember Baker, an' General Winfield Scott. If they look tired, excuse them; it's quite a climb."

The eldest boy showed me to my room, and so began my life at Smead's. Distressed with loneliness, I walked about the village for hours that afternoon, and on my return had time only to wash my face and comb my hair, when a bell summoned me to supper.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Smead was considerably dressed up in clean linen, a prodigious necktie, and a coat of black broadcloth. His wife wore a clean calico dress, with a gold-plated brooch at her throat.

"I wish the girls were here," said Smead.

"They are out in the country teaching school," Mrs. Smead explained; "they want to help their father."

"Beautiful girls," said their father—"tall, queenly, magnificent, talented. By force of habit I was about to ask, 'How much am I bid?'"

"How do you like Griggsby?" Mrs. Smead inquired of me, as though wishing to change the subject.

"I do not call it a very pretty place," I said, still loyal to Stillwater.

"An' you wouldn't be a pretty place if you were the mother of so many orators an' statesmen," said Smead. "You would be a proud but a worn an' weary place. There would be dust an' scratched-up gravel in

Digitized by Google

your immediate vicinity, an' you wouldn't care. Don't expect too much o' Griggsby. It is a Vesuvius of oratory, sir. It is full of high an' grand emotions, mingled with smoke an' fire an' thunder an' other accessories, includin' Smeads. It is the home an' birthplace of the Griggses. There was the Hon. John Henry Griggs, once the Speaker of our Lower House an' a great orator. By pure eloquence one day he established the reputation of an honest man, his greatest accomplishment, for as an honest man there were obstacles in his way. It didn't last long, that reputation; it had so much to contend with. He never gave it a fair chance. By an' by it tottered an' fell. Then he established another with some more eloquence. He was the first Dan'l Webster of Griggsby — looked like him, dressed like him, spoke like him, drank like him. Always took a tumbler of brandy before he made a speech, an' say, wa'n't he a swayer? The way he handled an audience

Digitized by Google

was like swingin' a cat by the tail. He kep' 'em goin'; didn't give 'em time to think. It wouldn't have been safe. As a thought-preventer John Henry beats the world! The result was both humorous an' pathetic."

Mr. Smead, with the voice of Stentor at the gates of Troy, delivered a playful imitation of the late John Henry.

"You're quite an orator," I said.

"Oh, I can swing the cat a little," said he. "Ye ought to hear me talk hoss or tackle the old armchair at an auction sale. It would break a drought. So much for the Smeads. As to the other great folks, Senator John Griggs, a distinguished member of our Upper House, is also a son of Griggsby, not so great as his father, but a high-headed, hard-workin', hand-engraved, full-tinted orator. He has a scar on his face three inches long that he got in a political argument. Flowers of rhetoric grow on him as naturally as moss on a log.

Digitized by Google

"Years ago he convicted a man of murder here with oratory—made the jury weep till they longed for blood an' got it. Bill Smithers loaded himself to the muzzle with rum an' oratory for the defense. Nobody did any work on the case. The oratory of Griggs was keener than the oratory of Smithers—more flowery, more movin'. It fetched the tears, an' conviction came with them. Of course, Griggs had the body of the victim on his side. Smithers roared an' wept for half a day. The jury had been swung until it was tired. It clung to the ground with tooth an' nail. The fountain of its tears had gone dry. The prisoner was convicted, slain by oratory—pure oratory, undefiled by intelligence; an' years after he was put in his grave a woman confessed that she had committed the crime. Oh, Griggs is a wonder. He's another D. W., but he's a good-hearted man. I heard him say that he had rebuilt the church of his parish with his earnings at

Digitized by Google

poker. That's the kind of man he is—reckless, but charitable. Everybody calls him John. They say that whisky has no effect on him. It is like water pouring on a rock. It only moistens the surface.

"Then there is Col. Silas Buckstone, our Congressman, whose home is also in Griggsby, another D. W., a man of quality an' quantity, great length, breadth, an' thickness, with a mustache eight inches long an' a voice that can travel like a trottin'-hoss. A man of a distinguished presence an' several distinguished absences.

"Yes, I regret to say that he goes on a spree now an' then. It's a pity, but so often the case with men o' talent—so awfully often. About twice a year the Colonel slides off his eminence, an' down he goes into the valley o' the common herd with loud yells o' joy. Once he slid across a corner o' the valley o' death, but that didn't matter. What's the use o' havin' an eminence unless you're to enjoy the privi-

Digitized by Google

lege of slidin' down it when ye want to? It was his eminence. While his spree lasts the Colonel buys everything in sight until his money is gone. Then some one has to go an' tow him back to us. Once he returned the proud owner of a carload of goats an' a millinery store."

Mr. Smead also told me of the two judges, Warner and Brooks, the ablest members of the county bar, who, it seems, were always wandering toward the dewy, meadowy path of dalliance. He said that sometimes they hit the path, and sometimes the path hit them and left some bruises. They enjoyed the distinctions of being looked up to and of being looked down upon.

"Of course, there are able men in the village who are addicted to sobriety," he went on. "Some of them have tried to reform, but, alas! the habit of sobriety has become fixed upon them—weak stomachs, maybe. They have to worry along without the stamp o' genius, just commonplace,

Digitized by Google

every-day-alike men. Nobody takes any notice of 'em. Once a prominent citizen denounced one o' them on the street as a damn little-souled, conscientious Christian who could get drunk on a thimble o' whisky. It was one o' the first indictments against virtue on record.

"'Ha! I see that you are sober,' said John Griggs to a constituent whom he met in the street one day. 'I will forgive you, but don't let it happen again. Think of the obscurity that awaits you and of the example you are setting to the young. Think of Deacon Bradley and Priscilla Perkins. Sir, if you keep on you will be wrecked on the hidden reefs of hopeless sobriety.'"

Dan'l Webster laughed for a minute and continued: "Griggsby is the home and Paradise of the rural hoss-trader, whose word is as good as his hoss, and who never fools anybody except when he is telling the truth. One of 'em was sued for sellin' a

Digitized by Google

worthless hoss. His defense was that a man who traded with him took his life in his hands, an' everybody ought to know it; an' the justice ruled that there were certain men that it was a crime to believe, an' that he who did it received a natural and deserved punishment."

So in his curious way, which was not to be forgotten, he described this heroism of the human stomach, this adventurous defiance of God and nature. In those callow days that view appealed to my sporting instinct.

"You see, the stamp of genius is on all our public men," Mr. Smead continued. "They all wear the scarlet blossom of capacity on their noses. The scarlet blossom an' the silver tongue go hand in hand, as it were."

Mr. Daniel Webster Smead was, indeed, a singular man. He had little learning, but was a keen observer. Ever since his boyhood he had browsed in good books,

Digitized by Google

notably those of Artemus Ward and Charles Dickens. The Websterian thunder did not appeal to him, but he had cultivated certain of the weaknesses which he had vividly described. He had a massive indolence and a great fondness for horses. He was drunk with hope all the time, and now and then sought the stimulation of beer. Hopes and hops were his worst enemies. When he talked people were wont to laugh, but every one said that Smead did not amount to anything. However, if all the other leading lights of the village had conferred their brains jointly on one man, he would not have been more than knee-high to the mental stature of Smead. He was a man of wide talent—a kind of human what-not. He could do many things well, but accomplished little.

In fact, Mr. Smead was an ass, and he knew enough to know that he was an ass, which of itself distinguished him above all the citizens of Griggsby. He was drifting

Digitized by Google

along in the bondage of custom; and he knew it, and laughed at his own folly.

As we rose from the table he said, in a little aside to me: "In the morning I'll show you a hoss an' a fool, an' both standard-bred an' in the two-thirty list."

I spent the evening in my own room with a book, and when I came down in the morning I saw Mr. Smead entering the gate in a shining red road cart behind a horse blanketed to his nose, and in knee and ankle boots. I hurried to the stable, where Mr. Smead stood proudly, with a short whip in his hand, while the boys were removing the harness and boots from a big, steaming stallion.

"There is Montravers — mark of two twenty-nine an' a half," said he, glibly. "By Bald Eagle out of Clara Belle, she by George Wilkes, he by Hambletonian X.; his dam was Queen Bess by Wanderer, out of Crazy Jane, she by Meteor. I expect him to transport me to the goal of affluence."

Digitized by Google

"I EXPECT HIM TO TRANSPORT ME TO THE GOAL OF AFFLUENCE"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Two of the boys were deftly scraping Montravers's sides, while the third sponged his mouth and legs. Then the youthful band fell to with rubbing-cloths, backed by terrible energy, on the body of the big horse.

"The fathers of this village all have to be helped," said Mr. Smead; "they're so busy with one thing or another, mostly another. Ye can't be a Dan'l Webster an' do anything else."

This matter of "helpin' father" seemed to me to be rather arduous. As the horse grew dry the boys grew wet. Perspiration had begun to roll down their faces.

"The trottin'-hoss is the natural ally of the orator an' the conversationalist," said Mr. Smead. "He stimulates the mind an' furnishes food for thought. A man who has owned a trotter is capable of any feat of the imagination, an' some of our deepest thinkers have graduated from the grand stand an' the sulky. Everybody goes in for trotters here.

Digitized by Google

"John Griggs an' Colonel Sile an' Horace Brooks an' Bill Warner, all have their trotters. If a farmer gets some money ahead he buys a trotter an' begins to train for speed an' bankruptcy. It helps him to a sense o' grandeur an' distinction. If there's anything else that can be done with money, he don't know it. His boys look like beggars, an' his hoss looks like a prince; just like mine. I told ye I'd show ye a fool, an' here I am — a direct descendant of Thankful Smead by Remember Baker. But I really have a prize in this animal. I expect to sell him for big money."

Soon we heard the voice of Mrs. Smead at the back door.

"Boys, where are you?" she called.

"Helpin' father," answered Daniel, the eldest of them.

"Well, breakfast is waiting," said she, with a touch of impatience in her tone. "You must be getting ready for school."

"He'll do now," said Smead. "Put on

Digitized by Google

the coolin' sheet an' walk him for ten minutes."

A big, spotless sheet blanket was thrown over the shiny, silken coat of the horse, and Rufus began to walk him up and down the yard while the rest of us went in to breakfast.

There was a pathetic contrast which I did not fail to observe, young as I was, between the silken coat of the beast and the faded calico dress of the woman; between his lustrous, flashing eyes and hers, dull and sad; between his bounding feet and hers, which moved about heavily; between the whole spirit of Montravers and that of Mrs. Smead. I saw, too, the contrast between the splendid trappings of the stallion and the patched trousers of the boys. I wondered how the boys were going to be cooled off. They simply took a hurried wash in a tin basin at the back door and sat down at the table in damp clothes. We could hear timid remarks in the kitchen about a worth-

Digitized by Google

less horse, about boys who would be late to school, and the delayed work of the day.

"If that hoss could only keep up with my imagination!" said Smead, mournfully.

"Dan'l, you must take care of the horse yourself in the morning," said Mrs. Smead.

"But my imagination keeps me so busy, mother," said he. "Montravers works it night an' day. It don't give me any sleep, thinkin' o' the wealth that's just ahead of us. It pants with weariness. Almost every night I dream of tossin' a whole basket of gold into my wife's lap an' sayin', 'There, mother, it's yours; do as you like with it.'"

She made no reply. That gold-tossing had revived her hope a little and pacified her for the moment.

Such was a sample day in the life of the Smeads when Dan'l Webster was at home. Every night and morning the boys were helping father by rubbing the legs and body of the stallion. I soon acquired the habit, partly because I admired the splendid

Digitized by Google

animal, partly to help the boys. I had never rubbed a horse's legs before, and it appealed to me as a new form of dissipation.

We were all helping father while the mother worked along from dawn till we had all gone to our beds—all save the head of the house. He spent his evenings reading, or in the company of the horsemen at the Palace Hotel.

I was now deeply interested in my school work. One night I had sat late with my problems in algebra, and lay awake for hours after I went to bed. The clock struck twelve, and still I could hear Mrs. Smead rocking as she sewed downstairs. By and by there were sounds of Mr. Smead entering the front door. Then I heard her say:

"Dan'l, you promised me not to do this again. The boys are growing up, and you must set them a better example."

She spoke kindly, but with feeling.

"Mother, don't wake me up," he pleaded. "I've enjoyed an evening of great pride an'

Digitized by Google

immeasurable wealth. They've been praisin' my hoss, an' two men from New York are comin' to buy him. I'm a Croesus. For the Lord's sake, lemme go to bed with the money!"

I lay awake thinking what a singular sort of slavery was going on in that house.

What a faithful, weary, plodding creature the slave was! She reminded me of those wonderful words which my mother had asked me and my sister to commit to memory:

"Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more, also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Thy God shall be my God, indeed, even though He be nothing better than a high-bred stallion!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

IN a way Henry Dunbar was like Texas, whence he had come with his sister Florence to go to school in Griggsby. Colonel Buckstone had often referred to him as "The Lone Star." He was big, warm-hearted, and brave, could turn a hand-spring, and was the best ball-player at the academy. He could also smoke and chew tobacco.

"Have a chew?" he asked, the first day we met.

I confessed with shame that I was not so accomplished.

"If you get sick, take some more," he said. "That's the only way. Everybody chews that is anybody."

It was almost true. Many of the leading

Digitized by Google

men went about with a bulge on one side of their faces. An idea came to me. I would show Henry that I had at least one manly accomplishment. So I conducted him to the Smead stable and began rubbing a leg of Montravers. Henry was impressed; he wanted to try it, and did, and thereby the horse got hold of his imagination also.

Next morning at daylight we went down to the fairground to see Montravers driven. There were other horses at work, and the shouts of the drivers and the swift tattoo of the hoofs quickened our pulses before we could see the track. The scene, so full of life and spirit, thrilled us. It was fine bait for boys and men. In our excitement we thought neither of school nor of breakfast.

By and by the leading citizens began to arrive in handsome runabouts and to take their places on the grand stand.

"That's Colonel Sile Buckstone," Henry whispered.

Digitized by Google

There was no mistaking the Colonel's bovine head and scarlet blossom. His voice roared a greeting to every newcomer. His son Ralph, our schoolmate, arrived with his father, and joined us down by the wire. Senator Griggs, Judge Warner, and a number of leading merchants had also arrived. These men had what was called a fine "delivery." Most of them sat in broadcloth and silk hats, expectorating with a delivery at once exact and impressive. There was the resounding Websterian tone coupled with a rustic swagger and glibness that could be found in every country village. What vocal and pedestrial splendor was theirs as they rose and strode to the sulky of Montravers, who had finished a trial heat! Much of the splendor had been imported from the capitals by Smithers, Brooks, and Buckstone; but more of it was natural Websterian effulgence.

Mr. Smead was right; the trotter was indeed the friend and ally of the "conver-

Digitized by Google

sationalist." How well those high-sounding names fitted the Websterian tone—Montravers, Hambletonian, Abdallah, Mambrino Chief. And so it was with all the vivid phrases of the racetrack. The sleek, high heads and spurning feet of the horses seemed to stimulate and reflect the Websterian spirit. When a man looked at one of those horses he unconsciously tightened his check rein. If his neck was a bit weary, he felt for his flask or set out for the Palace Hotel.

Those great men complimented Mr. Smead on his horse, and the Senator bet a hundred dollars with the Congressman that Montravers would win his race.

"Let us bet on that horse," said Henry to me; "we can't lose."

I confessed with some shame that I did not know how to bet.

"That's easy," said Henry. "I'll show you how when the time comes."

Then we went round among the stables.

Digitized by Google

What a center of influence and power was that half-mile track and the stables about it. It was a primary school of crime, with its museum of blasphemy and its department of slang and lewdness. What a place for the tender soul of youth!

There were the sleek trotters passing in and out, booted for their work. In the sulkies behind them were those cursing, kinglike, contemptuous jockeys, so sublime and exalted that they were even beyond the reach of our envy. There were the great prancing, beautiful stallions, and the swipes—heroic, foul-mouthed, proud, free, and some of them dog-faced. Scarred, sniffing bulldogs were among them, spaniels with grace locks on their brows, sleek little fox terriers, and now and then a roaring mastiff. How we envied them! We became their willing slaves, we boys of the school, fetching water and sweeping floors for the sacred privilege of rubbing a horse's leg. In the end some had been kicked out

Digitized by Google

of the stables, but they did not mind that. What was that if they could only play swipes and rub a horse's leg? It only heightened their respect and their will to return.

As my life went on I saw how these leading lights of Griggsby shone, like stars, above the paths of the young who were choosing their way.

We boys began to think that greatness was like a tree, with its top in the brain and its roots in the human stomach, and that the latter needed much irrigation. It seemed to us that poker, inebriety, slangy wit, and the lavish hand were as the foliage of the tree; that fame, wealth, and honor were its fruit; that the goat, the trotting-horse, and the millinery store were as birds of the air that sometimes lit in its branches.

We boys were wont to gather in an abandoned mill near the Smead house, on the river bank, after school, for practice in

Digitized by Google

chewing and expectoration, and to discuss the affairs of the village.

One day Henry Dunbar and Ralph Buckstone had a little flask of whisky, which they had stolen from the coat pocket of old Thurst Giles as he lay drunk in the lumber yard. Henry held it up and gave us an able imitation of John Griggs in the bar-room of the Palace Hotel, through the open door of which we boys had witnessed bloody and amusing episodes.

"Gentlemen, here's to the juice of the corn," he began, in the swelling tone of Griggs. "The inspiration of poetry, the handmaid of eloquence, the enemy of sorrow, the friend of genius, the provoker of truth."

It was rather convincing to the youthful mind, coming as it did from the lips of the great Griggs. We wondered how it was that old Thurst Giles and Billy Suds, and other town drunkards, had failed to achieve greatness. They were always soaked; Ralph

Digitized by Google

said that the juice did not have a fair chance in such men, that they were too poor and scrawny, and their stomachs too small. They lacked capacity. It was like putting seed in thin soil. Everybody knew that John Griggs could drink a whole big bottle and walk off as if nothing had happened.

Henry Dunbar said that a man had to have money and clothes and a good voice, and especially a high hat, as well as whisky and cigars, to amount to anything.

Tommy West thought that the failure of Thurst and Billy was due to the fact that they were dirty and mean, and could not make a speech. In his view, also, they didn't shave often enough. If a man used whisky just for the sake of keeping up appearances, it was all right; but if he used it to get drunk with, it made him just naturally comical.

Parents, ministers, and Sunday schools were temporary obstacles to the wearing of beaver hats, the carrying of gold-headed

Digitized by Google

canes, and the driving of fast horses. It would not do for a boy to be swelling around bigger than his father, but when we had become large and strong and worthy, the beaver and its accompaniments would be added unto us. Some of us got the idea—although none of us dared to express it—that our fathers were not so great or so grand as they might be, and we thought we knew the reason. Luckily, from this last of our secret sessions I went home sick, convinced that a humble life was best for me.

The next day Florence sent a note to my room, saying that she wished to see me. We went out for a walk together.

"I'm going to look after you," she said. "You haven't any mother here, and you need me. You've simply *got* to behave yourself."

She stopped, faced me, and stamped her pretty foot on the ground, and there were tears in her blue eyes. She turned me about

Digitized by Google

and took my arm and held it close against her side as we walked on in silence.

"I don't know how—that's what's the matter with me," I said, helplessly.

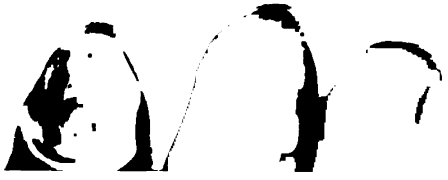
"Don't worry," she answered. "I'm only a girl, but I can give you lessons in the art of being a gentleman if—if necessary. I owe much to you, Havelock, and I can't forget it. I shall not let you be a fool."

"I can't help it," I said.

"Then *I'll* try to help it," she answered. "At least, I'll make it hurt you."

I did my best after that—not very well, I fear, but my best, all things considered—and kept my heart decently clean for her sake. More than once I wept for sorrow over my adventure through the ice, for it had made me give her up.

That night I told Ralph that Florence loved him, and how I knew. It was a sublime renunciation. After all, what is better than the heart of a decent boy? I wish it were mine again.



Digitized by Google

"I love her, too," he said, "but I haven't dared to tell her of it. I'm going to see her now."

After that Ralph was a model student and a warm friend of mine.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

FAIR-TIME had arrived. The Smead boys had worked every night and morning on the legs and body of that splendid horse. His coat was satin, and his plumes were silk when he went out of the stable. He returned dripping with sweat and foam.

I wonder what Daniel Webster Smead would have accomplished with those boys if they had had the care and training of his "hoss." But they were only descended from Thankful Smead and Remember Baker and Winfield Scott, and what was that in comparison with the blood of Hambletonian X.?

I gave to Henry, to be wagered, a part of the money which my father had provided

Digitized by Google

for the term's expenses. Henry promised that he would surely double it, and that is what happened. Montravers won, our pockets bulged with money, but the horse did not sell. A buyer from New York made an offer, which was refused. Mr. Smead informed us that the buyer had said that if Montravers showed that he could repeat his performance the price was not too high. Hope realized maketh the heart strong; and our imaginations, lighted by the gleam of gold, worked far into the night after full days of labor.

The next week the stallion was entered at Diddlebury. Henry and I were going over to get rich. Early in the morning of the race we skipped school and took a train to Diddlebury. Such riches have never come to me as we had in our minds that morning. We considered what we should do with the money. I secretly decided that I would buy a diamond ring for Florence Dunbar, his sister, and that,

Digitized by Google

if there were any money left, I would give it to my mother.

Henry had his mental eye on a ranch in Texas, near his father's—not a very big one —he explained to me. As Henry knew the art of betting, I gave all my money to him, except a dollar and fifty-four cents.

We spent the morning at the stables by the track, and endured a good deal of abuse from the swipe boys, who looked down upon us from that upper level of horsedom. We knew it was justified, and made only a feeble response. We stood near with eyes and ears of envy while they jested with many a full round oath of their night's adventures. And I remember that one of them called to me:

"Here, sonny, keep away fr'm that mare's legs. She'll kick a hole in ye. If she don't I will. Come, now, take a walk. Run home to yer mammy."

That was the mildest brand of scorn which they ladled out to us when we tried

Digitized by Google

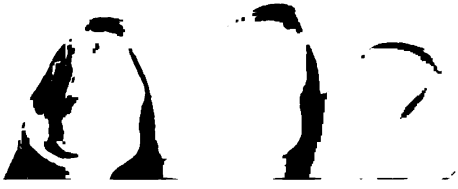
to show our familiarity with the "trottin'-hoss." We found the stall of Montravers, but the trainer would not have us there despite our friendship for the owner. Driven by the contempt of our superiors from this part of the grounds, we haunted the rifle ranges and the gingerbread and lemonade stalls until the grand stand was thrown open. Henry left me for a while, and on his return said that he had wagered all our money on Montravers. I sat in a joyful trance until the bell rang.

The race began with our favorite among the five leaders of a large field. Suddenly the sky turned black. Montravers had broken and begun bucking, and acted as though he wanted to kick. He fell far behind, and when the red flag came down before him and shut him out of the race, I had to believe it, and could not. It was like having to climb a tree with a wolf coming, and no tree in sight.

Digitized by Google

Now, the truth is, Montravers might have won, but his driver sold the race, as we were to learn by and by—sold it for ten dollars and two bottles of whisky. He pulled and bedeviled the horse until the latter showed more temper than speed. The horse made every effort to get free and head the procession. He was on the square, that horse, but the ten-dollar man kept pulling. The horse was far more decent, more honest, more human than his driver; but the latter blamed the horse, and the New-Yorker got him for a thousand dollars less than he would have had to pay by any other method.

The ten-dollar man proved to be one of the few philanthropists in Griggsby. He became one of the great educators of the village. He stood by the gate that opened into the broad way of leisure. His cheap venality was like a club in his hands, with which he smote the head of the fool and turned him back. If he had been a hun-



Digitized by Google

dred-dollar man, the farms of the county would have gone to weeds.

Henry and I had only twenty-four cents between us. We met Mr. Smead coming from the stables. He was awfully cut up, in spite of that happy way he had of taking his trouble. We soon saw that something like an earthquake had happened to him.

"My education is complete," said he, sadly. "I have got my degree; it is D.F. I have honestly earned it, and shall seek new worlds to conquer. The man who mentions hoss to me after this day shall perish by the sword of my wrath."

He carried his little driving-whip in his hand.

"I have sold everything but this whip," he added; "I keep that as a souvenir of my school days. Boys, are you ready to join me in a life of industry?"

"We are," said both of us, in concert.

"Then, in the language of D. Webster, follow me, strike down yon guard, gain the

Digitized by Google

highway, an' start for a new destination. Boys, we will walk home; let us shake from our feet the dust of Diddlebury."

"We have got to walk," said Henry. "We lost every dollar we had on the race."

"We are all of equal rank," said Smead, with a smile. "I will share with you my distinction. There is enough of it for all of us. Evenly divided, it should satisfy the ambition of every damn fool in Vermont. Now let us proceed to the higher walks of life, the first of which shall be the walk to Griggsby."

The sun was low when, beyond the last house in the village of Diddlebury, we came out on the turnpike with our faces set in the direction of Griggsby, nine miles away —and destinations far better and more remote.

Henry and I were weary, but the talk of Smead helped us along.

By and by he said: "Boys, as workers of iniquity we are failures; let us admit it.

Digitized by Google

For the weak the competition is too severe. The ill-trained, half-hearted, third-rate, incompetent criminal is no good. He is respected neither by God, man, nor the devil. Let's be respectable. If we must have something for nothing, let's go to cuttin' throats, or boldly an' openly an' without shame go into the railroad business. Then we might have our mansions, our horses, an' our hounds. Whether we died in bed or on the gallows, we should be honored in song an' story, like Captain Kidd."

He gaily sang a verse of the ballad, very familiar in the days of which I am telling:

"Jim Fisk was a man, wore his heart on his sleeve,
No matter what people might say,
And he did all his deeds—both the good and the bad—
In the broad, open light of the day.
If a man was in trouble Jim helped him along
To drive the grim wolf from the door;
He often did right, and he often did wrong,
But he always remembered the poor.

Digitized by Google

"That's the thing!" he went on. "Cut the throats of the people, grab a million, an' throw back a thousand for charity.

"As it is, we are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. Satan scorns our aid. I, for one, resent it. After all, a man of my gifts an' attainments deserves some recognition. Le's resign our commissions in his army an' go in for reform.

"Le's take up the idee o' givin' somethin' fer somethin', an' see how that 'll work. In my opinion, it 'll pay better. For one thing, we shall not have much competition in Griggsby. Of course, there are the churches, but they are busy with the sins of the Philistines an' Amalekites an' the distant heathen.

"Satan has made Griggsby his headquarters as bein' more homelike than any other part of the universe. That is the place to begin operations. We'll be lonesome an' unpopular, but we'll raze hell—I mean, of course, that we'll cause it to move

Digitized by Google

from Griggsby. There is nothing else for us to do. We are driven to it. Griggsby is untouched; it is virgin soil. As we have been coming along I have been counting on my fingers the young men of good families who under my eye have gone down to untimely an' dishonored graves in that little village. There are twenty-six that I can think of who have followed the leading lights to perdition. Of course, there are more, but that is enough. It's a ghastly harvest, boys. First, we will attack the leading lights; we will put them out."

Henry and I were rather deeply impressed by this talk, so new, so different, so suited to our state of mind. It hit us straight between the eyes.

I was in a bad way, and dreadfully worried, without a cent for books or tuition or spending money, or the courage to appeal to my father.

"I've got some money in my pocket, boys," he went on. "If I could only buy

Digitized by Google

The Little Corporal [our weekly paper] it would be just the jaw bone with which to slay the Philistines. Wholesome publicity is the weapon we need. With it we could both demolish an' build up."

Black clouds had covered the sky, and now we were walking in darkness, with a damp wind coming out of the west. We were some miles from the village of Griggsby when a drenching rain began to fall. We could see a light in a window close by the road, and we made for it.

A woman timidly opened the door as we rapped. Smead knew her.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mrs. Bradshaw," said he. "Where is Bill?"

"He an' Sam Reynolds went over to Diddlebury Fair," said she.

"Well, it is time the prize pumpkins were rollin' home," said Smead; "but I'm 'fraid *we* have rolled about as far as we can to-night. A heavy rain has set in, an' we're nearly wet through."

Digitized by Google

"We ain't much to offer you," said the woman, "but if one o' you can sleep with the hired man there's a bed for the other two upstairs."

"Do you think the hired man would sleep with me?" asked Smead, in playful astonishment.

"I guess so," said the woman.

"Well, if you don't think he'd be offended, if he wouldn't git mad an' throw me out, I'd take it as a great compliment to sleep with the hired man."

The woman put aside her sewing, rose wearily, lit a candle, and went upstairs to make the bed for Henry and me. She moved heavily in big shoes. Her face was pale and care-worn, her hands were knotted with toil. She was another slave.

"Her girl is away teaching school," Smead explained to us. "One boy has worked his way to the grave—worn out as ye'd wear out a hoss. Another is working his way through college."

Digitized by Google

We went to bed, but my sorrows kept me awake. Henry and I discussed them in whispers for half an hour. He said that he felt sure his sister Florence could lend us some money. Their bank account was in her name.

He fell asleep by and by, but I lay thinking of Florence and of my folly. I could hear Mrs. Bradshaw singing softly downstairs as she rocked in her sewing-chair. Near midnight I heard a carriage, and soon there was an entrance at the front door. Then I heard the woman speak in a low tone, and the angry answer of the man.

Had it come to this, he said, with an oath. A man couldn't do as he liked in his own house? He would see. Then he proceeded to break the furniture. Oh, the men were always at the bat in those days, and the women chasing the ball!

When we left in the morning, on a muddy road, Mr. Smead said to us:

"That man is another Simon Legree.

Digitized by Google

The women are mostly slaves about here. If they could have their way, how long do you suppose the leading lights would be leading us? What would become of the trottin'-hoss an' the half-mile road to bankruptcy, an' perdition an' the red noses?

"Now, look at me. I went an' grabbed the earnings o' my wife an' children an' staked 'em on a hoss. Not that I've anything agin the hoss; hosses would be all right if it wa'n't for their associatin' with men. You put a five-thousan'-dollar hoss in the company of a ten-dollar man, an' the reputation o' the hoss is bound to suffer. If it's hard on a hoss, it's harder on a woman.

"Boys, I shall not buy the *Corporal*. I shall give every dollar in my pocket to Mrs. Smead an' throw in myself. It ain't much, but it may be more."

That week he lettered a placard with great pains, and had it framed and hung in the "drawing-room," and it said:

Digitized by Google

Proclamation of D. W. Smead:

In the name of God, amen. I hereby declare my wife to be a free woman and entitled to the rights of a human being in my home; the same right that I have to be wise or foolish. She shall have a part of the money that she earns by her own labor, and the right to rest when she is weary, and to enjoy a share of my abundant leisure. All persons are warned against harboring or trusting me any further at her expense.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

THE physical as well as the mental and moral boundaries of the community of Griggsby, in northern New England, were fitted to inspire eloquence. The town lay between two mountain ranges crowned with primeval forests, and near the shore of a beautiful lake, with the Canadian line a little north of it. There lived among us a lawyer from the state of Maine who had sung of its "forests, lakes, and rivers, and the magnificent sinuosities of its coast," but he had been silenced by Colonel Buckstone's "towering, cloud-capped, evergreen galleries above the silver floor of our noble lake."

There were also our mental and moral boundaries; on the east, hard times and

Digitized by Google

history; on the west, the horse-traders of York State, mingled with wild animals and backed by pathless woods; on the north, the Declaration of Independence; on the south, the Democratic party; while above was a very difficult heaven, and beneath a wide open and most accessible hell.

Our environment had some element that appealed to every imagination, and was emphasized by the solemn responsibilities of the time. Our ancient enemies in the South had begun to threaten the land under the leadership of Seymour and Blair. The oratory of New England was sorely taxed.

My own imagination had been touched by all these influences, and by another—the dear and beautiful girl of whom I have said not half enough. There was no flower in all the gardens of Griggsby so graceful in form or so beautiful in color as Florence Dunbar. I felt a touch of the tender passion every time I looked into her eyes. No, she was not of the "sweet Alice" type;

Digitized by Google

she was too full-blooded and strong-armed for that. She never entered a churchyard without being able to walk out of it, and if she had loved "Ben Bolt" she would have got him, to his great happiness and advantage. She was a modest, fun-loving, red-cheeked, sweet-souled girl, with golden hair and hazel eyes, and seventeen when first I saw her. Candor compels me to admit that she had a few freckles, but I remember that I likcd the look of them; they had come of the wind and the sunlight.

The father of my chum Henry and his sister Florence had gone West from Griggsby with his bride in the early fifties, and had made a fortune. Florence and her brother had grown up on a ranch, and had been sent back to enjoy the educational disadvantages of Griggsby. They could ride like Indians, and their shooting had filled us with astonishment. With a revolver Florence could hit a half dollar thrown in the air before it touched the ground.

Digitized by Google

Her brother Henry was two years older, and as many inches taller than I, and always in my company, as I have said. He had begun to emulate the leading lights of the neighborhood. He and Ralph Buckstone, the handsome and gifted son of the great Colonel, were friends and boon companions.

Having been chastened by misfortune, like the great Dan'l Webster Smead, and being in dire need of money, Henry and I went straight to Florence's room the morning of our return from the horse races at Diddlebury, and confessed our ruin and the folly that had led to it. Henry urged me to do it, and said that he would do all the talking, for I told him that I would ask no favor of Florence—coward that I was.

She was kind, but she added to our conviction of guilt a sense of idiocy which was hard to bear. I secretly resolved to keep my brain unspotted by suspicion thereafter, whatever might happen to my soul. We gladly promised to be good. We would

Digitized by Google

have given our notes for a million acts of virtue.

"We are for reform," I assured her. "Henry and Mr. Smead and I have had a long talk about ourselves and the village. We are going to do what we can to improve the place. He spoke of buying *The Little Corporal* and drowning out the gamblers and drunkards with publicity."

"That would be fun!" she exclaimed. "I will write to my father about that. Maybe it's lucky after all that you have had this trouble. I am grateful to you, Havelock, and I am going to help you, but you—"

She hesitated, and I was quick to say:

"I will not take your help unless you will let me return the money. I can work Saturdays in the mill and do it."

"Oh, don't think of it again!" she said, with sympathy.

"I must think of it," was my answer, "and with God's help I will not be so unfair to you again."

Digitized by Google

She did not know how deeply I felt the words, and added:

"I am afraid that Mr. Hall may send you both home."

That, indeed, was our great fear.

I have tried to make it clear that there were some good men in Griggsby; and I must not fail to tell of one of them, the Rev. Appleton Hall, head of the academy, a plain, simple, modest citizen. What a splendid figure of a man he was—big, strong-armed, hard-handed, with black eyes and a beautiful, great head crowned with a wavy mass of blonde hair. That and its heavy, curling beard were as yellow as fine gold. What a tower of rugged strength and fatherly kindness! We loved the touch of his hand and the sound of his voice—when we did not fear them. As he stood with his feet in the soil of his garden and his collar loose at his throat he reminded me of that man of old of whom it was written: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten

Digitized by Google

thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."

He fought against the powers of darkness for the sake of the boys. He was handicapped; he could not denounce the great men of the village by name as pestilential enemies of decency and order. Perhaps that should have been done by the churches. Old "App" Hall, as some called him, warned and watched us; but, with his rugged figure, his old-fashioned clothes, and his farmer dialect, he had not the appeal—the dazzling appeal of Websterians like Griggs and Colonel Buckstone. However, there was something fatherly about him that made it easy to confess both our truancy and our money loss. Of course, he forgave us, but with stern advice, which did not get under our jackets, as had that of Dan'l Webster Smead. He said we were fools; but we knew that, and would have admitted more.

I began to attend to business as a student,

Digitized by Google

but Henry went on with his skylarking. Dan'l Webster Smead went to work buying produce for the Boston market, and spent every evening at home. He got his wife a hired girl, and the poor woman soon had a happier look in her face. The children wore new clothes, and a touch of the buoyant spirit of the racer Montravers, now cast out of his life, soon entered the home of Smead.

Ralph Buckstone and I had become the special favorites of Appleton Hall. Florence had managed to keep me out of mischief for some time. Naturally, my love for her had led to the love of decency and honor, which meant that I must do the work set before me and keep on fairly good terms with myself. It was Florence, I am sure, who had had a like effect upon Ralph. We took no part, thereafter, in the ranker deviltry of the boys and did fairly good work in school.

One evening Ralph came to my room and told me that he had had a quarrel with his

Digitized by Google

father. It seemed that a clever remark of Florence about the last spree of the Colonel had reached his ears. The Colonel, boiling with indignation, had made some slighting reference to her and all other women in the presence of his son. High words and worse had followed, in the course of which the sacred, gold-headed cane of the Colonel, presented to him by the Republican electors of the town, had been splintered in a violent gesture. The cane had been used, not for assault, but for emphasis. Ralph had been blamed by the Colonel for the loss of his temper and the loss of his cane. The great man might have forgiven the former, but the latter went beyond his power of endurance. So he turned the boy out of doors, and Ralph came directly to my room, where his father found and forgave him with great dignity in the morning, and bade him return to his home.

There was some drunken brawling in the streets by night, and now and then a

Digitized by Google

memorable battle, followed by prosecution and repairs. About then Appleton Hall gave a lecture on the morals of Griggsby, which was the talk of the school and the village for a month or more. In it were the words about Daniel Webster and the first Bunker Hill oration which I quoted at the beginning of this little history. People began to wake up.

Our preachers came back from Samaria and Egypt, "from Africa's sunny fountains and India's coral strands," and began to think about Griggsby. At last they seemed to recognize that foreign heathens were inferior to the home-made article; that they were not to be compared with the latter in finish and general efficiency. They turned their cannons of oratory and altered the range of their fire. A public meeting was held in the town hall, and the curses of the village were discussed and berated. A chapter of the Cadets of Temperance was organized, and Ralph and

Digitized by Google

I joined. We carried torch lights in a small procession led by Samantha Simpson, and cheered and shouted and had a grand time; but we failed to overawe the enemy. Nothing resulted that could be discerned by the naked contemporary eye save the ridicule that was heaped upon us. If one wanted to create a laugh in a public speech he would playfully refer to the Cadets of Temperance. Good people were wont to say, "What's the use?"

The people are a patient ox. A big woolen mill polluted the stream that flowed through the village. It was our main water supply. The people permitted the pollution until the water was not fit to use. Then they went back to the wells and springs again. There was some futile talk about the shame of it. Letters of complaint were printed in *The Little Corporal*, our local paper. By and by a meeting was held and a committee appointed to see what could be done. They made sundry suggestions, most of

Digitized by Google

which were ridiculed, and the committee succeeded only in getting themselves disliked.

As a matter of fact, the leading merchants and lawyers, and even the churches, derived a profit from the presence of the woolen mill. Then, too, about every man in Griggsby had his own imperishable views, and loved to ridicule those of his neighbor. Indolence, jealousy, and conceit were piled in the path of reform, which was already filled with obstacles.

Now, in those evil days a thing happened which I wish it were not my duty to recall. Unpleasant gossip had gone about concerning Florence and me. As to its source I had my suspicions. Colonel Buckstone had seen us sitting together by the roadside adjoining the meadow where we had gathered flowers. To Colonel Buckstone that was a serious matter, especially in view of the fact that Florence had expressed strong disapproval of his general conduct. Men

Digitized by Google

like him are ever trying to hold the world in leash and to pull it back to the plane of their own morals.

Griggsby was like most country towns. The county fair had passed; the trotters had retired; Colonel Buckstone had not slid off his eminence for some time, and the material for conversation had run low; somebody had to be sacrificed. The inventive talent of the village got busy. It needed a gay Lothario, and I was nominated and elected without opposition, save that of my own face. It ought to have turned the tide, but it did not. My decency was all assumed. At heart I was a base and subtle villain.

Florence naturally turned to me for advice, and I felt the situation bitterly.

"You poor thing!" said she, with a tearful laugh. "I'm sorry for you, but don't worry. Your honor shall be vindicated."

"I'll fight the Colonel," I said.

"You shall not fight him," said she. "Go

Digitized by Google

and fight somebody else. I want to save *him* for myself."

That is the way she took it, bravely, calmly. She did not ask any one to be sorry for her. A less courageous spirit would have given up and gone home in disgust; but she stood her ground, with the fatherly encouragement of Appleton Hall, and stored the lightning that by and by was to fall from her hand upon the appalled citizens of Griggsby.

I was at work in my room one evening when Dan'l Webster Smead came to my door.

"Florence Dunbar and a friend have called to see you," he said. "They are waiting in the parlor."

I went down to meet them at once. Florence and Miss Elizabeth Collins, Colonel Buckstone's stenographer, rose to greet me.

Neither I nor any other man knew at that time that Florence had done her family a great favor when the Collins home had

Digitized by Google

been threatened by a mortgage. Years after it helped me to understand the conduct of Elizabeth. In a moment I had heard their story.

Before going home that evening the Colonel had dictated a letter to Roswell Dunbar, Florence's father, calculated to fill his mind with alarm and cause him to recall her from Griggsby. Miss Collins had left the office with her employer, who had put the letter with others in his overcoat pocket, intending to mail them in the morning, the post office having closed for the night. She said that the Colonel had been imbibing freely that day and had gone to the Palace Hotel for supper.

"I have decided to start for home in the morning," said Florence. "I must reach there before the letter does, and probably I shall not come back."

"Don't go," I said. "I'll attend to the letter."

"How?" she asked.

Digitized by Google

"I don't know, but in some way," I said, with the strong confidence of youth in its own capacity. "I only ask that you give me permission to consult my friend Dan'l Webster Smead in strict confidence. It won't do to let the Colonel drive us out of town. He is the one to be driven out."

Florence agreed with me, and I walked home with the girls, and left them in a better frame of mind.

I asked Smead to come to my room with me, and laid the facts before him. He sat smoking thoughtfully, and said not a word until I had finished. Then he said in that slow drawl of his:

"I take it that you are willing to suffer, if need be, for the sake of decency and fair women."

"I am," was my response.

"Then again I ask you to follow me," he said, rising; and together we left his house as the old town clock was striking nine.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Smead wore his great overcoat with its fur collar and cuffs.

"The Colonel has often admired it," said he. "He's a great swapper when he's drinking, and perhaps—"

"I shall fight the Colonel, if necessary," I suggested.

"Hush, boy! Let us first try eloquence," said he. "It is only the vulgar mind that resorts to muscle when the tongue may do as well. Eloquence, my dear boy, is the jimmy of Griggsby; it is also the gold brick, the giant powder, the nitroglycerin of Griggsby. Let us see what it can accomplish."

We went on in silence, and soon heard sounds of revelry in a bar-room. We stopped and listened a moment, after which he led me farther up the street.

"The Colonel began to slide from his eminence to-day," my companion whispered. "I doubt not he is still sliding, and what I hope to hear are sundry deep-voiced remarks about the 'witchin' hour of night.'"

Digitized by Google

We came soon to the lighted windows of the Palace Hotel, through which a loud and mirthful joy floated into the still night. We listened again. I could hear the rumbling words, "When churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead."

"Those graves and churchyards are counterfeit," Smead whispered. "They have not the Buckstonian ring to them. Let's go in for a minute.

We entered. About the stove in the office was the usual crowd of horsemen with meerschaum pipes. I took the only vacant chair by the side of a maudlin old soldier who did chores for his keep, and who addressed me with incoherent mumbles. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke and the odor of rum and molasses. "Rat" Emerson, a driver, was telling how he had worn out a faster horse than his in the scoring and won a race. Through the open door of the bar-room I could see a man with

Digitized by Google

his glass raised, and hear him saying in a stentorian tone:

"Ye call me chief, and ye do well to call him chief who for twelve long years has met upon the arena every shape of man or beast the broad empire of Rome could furnish, and who never yet lowered his arm."

This tournament of orators was interrupted by Smead, who was suddenly and almost simultaneously embraced by every member of the group, while the barkeeper was preparing to minister to his needs.

"Again I am in the grasp of the octopus of intemperance," I heard Smead say, whereat the others roared with laughter.

Soon he disengaged himself, and I saw him speaking to the bartender. In a moment he came out, and we left the place together.

"Colonel Buckstone is taking the nine-thirty train to St. Johnstown," he whispered. "We must hurry and get aboard. There is yet time."

We ran to the depot and caught the train. Colonel Buckstone sat near the center of

Digitized by Google

the smoking-car with Thurst Giles, a town drunkard, of Griggsby. Fortunately, we got a seat just behind them. I remember that, of the two, Thurst was much the soberer. Shabby and unshaven, he was an odd sort of extravagance for the imposing Colonel to be indulging in. The latter was arrayed in broadcloth and fine linen, and crowned with a beaver hat.

"Giles, I like you," said Buckstone, in a thick, maudlin voice; "but, sir, I feel constrained to remind you that in the matter of dress and conduct you are damnably careless. You, sir, are in the unfortunate position of a man climbing to a great height. You are all right as long as you do not look down."

Giles laughed, as did others near them.

"But be of good cheer," the Colonel went on, as he passed him a roll of greenbacks. "I appoint you Chancellor of the Exchequer, and shall at once look after the improvement of your person. All I demand of you

Digitized by Google

is that you pay the bills and keep sober, sir. Do not worry about me, but rest assured that I can drink enough for both of us, and that your occupation as paymaster will be sufficient."

A farmer with a long beard was passing down the aisle of the car.

"My friend, your beard annoys me," said the Colonel. "Are you much attached to it?"

"No; it's attached to me," the farmer answered, as he stopped and looked at the statesman in a flurry of laughter.

"If you don't mind, sir, I presume that it wouldn't hurt the feelings of your beard to part with you. Please have it removed. It makes me nervous."

"I'll have it cut and boxed and shipped to you," said the farmer.

"Giles, give the gentleman ten dollars, and take his note payable in whiskers," the statesman directed.

At the next station a number entered the

Digitized by Google

car, and among them was the Websterian form of John Henry Griggs, with its stove-pipe hat and gold-headed cane.

"Hello, Senator. Would you allow me to look at your hat?" the Colonel demanded of him.

"Certainly," said the gentleman addressed, as he laughingly passed his beaver to the Colonel, having halted by the seat of the latter.

The Colonel examined it critically, and asked, "How much will you take for it?"

"Well, to-night it's a pretty valuable hat," said the other. "I wouldn't care to take less than twenty-five dollars for it."

"And it is easily worth that to my needy friend here, who seeks admittance to the higher circles of society," the Colonel answered. "Giles, you will kindly settle with the Senator."

Giles paid for the hat, and was promptly crowned with it, to the great amusement of every occupant of the car. The big

Digitized by Google

beaver came down upon his ears and settled until its after part rested on his coat collar. The Colonel passed his gold-headed cane to his new friend, singing as he did so:

"He often did right, and he often did wrong,
But he always remembered the poor."

When the noisy laughter had subsided he shrewdly remarked to the passive Giles:

"Now, sir, you have the prime essentials of respectability."

"I feel like a d—— fool," Giles protested.

"Never mind your feelings," said the Colonel. "Take care of your looks, and your feelings will take care of themselves."

At the next station a man entered the car leading a lank hound.

"How much for your dog?" the Colonel demanded.

"Ten dollars."

"Make it fifteen, and I'll take him. I don't want a dog that's worth less than fifteen dollars."

Digitized by Google

"All right!"

"Mr. Giles, kindly settle with the gentleman."

The hound was paid for, and Giles promptly took possession of him.

"That is the Colonel's way of advertising," Smead whispered to me. "When he buys anything of a farmer he always overpays him, and the farmer never ceases to talk about it."

In the lull that followed Smead rose and showed himself to the Colonel.

"Ha! There is Senator Smead and his famous overcoat," was Buckstone's greeting.

"That coat has always worried me. In all my plans for the improvement of Griggsby that overcoat has figured more or less. What will you take for it?"

Smead drew off his coat, which had a rolling collar of brown fur.

"I should not care to sell it," said Smead, "but I will trade even for yours."

"Anything for the good of the old town,"

Digitized by Google

GILES WAS AN EPIC FIGURE

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

said the obliging Colonel, as they exchanged overcoats.

In a moment each had put on his new coat.

"Here, I don't want your gloves," said Buckstone, as he drew them out of a side pocket.

I observed that Smead had been feeling the contents of his coat.

"Keep them," said he. "You shall have all that my coat contained, and I shall claim all that was in yours."

The train entered the depot at St. Johnstown.

The Colonel and his new secretary followed the crowd to the station platform. Giles, in big boots and patched and threadbare garments, his big beaver hat resting on his ears, with the Colonel's bag in one hand while the other held his gold-headed cane and the leash of the lank and wistful hound, was an epic figure. I doubt if Colonel Buckstone could have had a more able assistant in the task which lay before

Digitized by Google

him that night, for in his lighter moods the Colonel was a most industrious merry-maker. We saw them buying another dog on the station platform, and presently they started for an inn, with two quarreling dogs and the bag and the gold-headed cane and the beaver hat, all in the possession of the faithful Giles.

"I have secured the letters," said Smead. "As I suspected, they were in a pocket of this overcoat, and we can return to Griggsby by the midnight train; you must never tell what you know of this—not a word, not a syllable. He will land in New York in a day or two—always points that way when he's drinking—and will not think of the letter for weeks, anyhow. Tell Florence to write to her father and explain the Colonel's rage. That will take the edge off his razor."

I promised, and we were soon riding back to Griggsby. It was a sleepless but a happy and wonderful night for me and Mr. Smead.

Digitized by Google

Early in the morning he went to the dormitory with a note that I had written to Florence. When I met her she took my hand, but did not speak. I knew why. For a long minute we walked together in silence; then she said, rather brokenly:

"Havelock, you are the most wonderful boy that I ever met, and I owe you everything. What *can* I do for *you*?"

The words were a new blow to me, for, as the reader will understand, they put her farther away.

"Please take that back," I said, almost woefully. "Please do not think that you owe me anything. I don't want you to feel that way. I didn't—"

I was about to say that it was not I who had obtained the letter from the Colonel, but I halted, suddenly remembering my promise.

"You strange, modest boy!" she exclaimed. "Don't you want me to be grateful to you?"

Digitized by Google

"Florence," I said, with all the seriousness of my nature, "I'd almost rather you'd hate me."

I have never forgotten the look in her face then, and how quickly it changed color. A sorry fool I was not to have understood it; but, then, what did I know about women? She, too, knew as little of the heart of a Puritan lad who had grown up in the edge of a wilderness.

A few days later the ragged Giles walked into Griggsby with a battered beaver hat on his head and a gold-headed cane in his left hand, while with his right he wielded a bull whip over the backs of a pair of oxen which the Colonel had purchased.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

DAN'L WEBSTER SMEAD was right. Colonel Buckstone went to New York, and Ralph joined him there. Weeks passed, and they were still absent. Then the truth came to me and to Florence in a letter from Ralph, which she asked me to read. It ran as follows:

"DEAREST FLORENCE,—I'm having a hard time with the governor. I want you to know that I do not believe a word of all I've heard about you, and that I shall never care about anybody else. I'm going to England with my aunt. Dad suddenly decided that for me here in New York, and we've had an awful row. It seems as if I ought to be there with you, but I can't. Luck is against me. I should have to walk

Digitized by Google

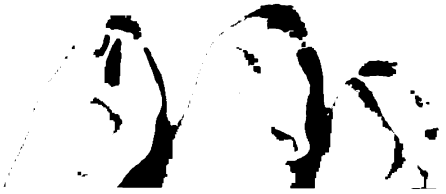
to Griggsby and go to work for my living, for I should have no home. Don't worry; everything will come out all right. Dad says I may write to you and come home in a year. What do we care what people say so long as we are true to each other, which I will always be. Dad says that Henry is leading me astray. What do you think of that?"

Then he added his signature and his London address.

The girl was game. Her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Never mind," said she; "my turn will come by and by."

She said that she had written to Ralph; and I knew, without saying it, that he would receive no letter from her, for I suspected that the cunning old politician would have laid his plans to discourage him with her silence. Two other letters came from Ralph, the last of which complained of what he called "her indifference"; and, although I



Digitized by Google

wrote him, as did she, again and again, I happen to know that Ralph looked in vain for a letter.

Yes, it was the old, old plan, and easier managed in those days, when England was very far from us and one who had crossed the ocean was a curiosity.

"Ralph ain't the right timber for a hero," said Smead, as we sat together one day. "He won't do."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Too easily bamboozled. For one thing, a hero has got to be bigger than his father, especially when his father is only knee-high to a johnny cake. If I were young an' full o' vinegar, I'd jump in an' cut him out."

I made no answer.

"You're a good jumper," he suggested; "why don't ye jump for this big prize? The girl has beauty an' character an' wit an' wealth. Don't be afraid; hop in an' take her."

"It's impossible," I said. "She don't care for me; but that's only one reason."

Digitized by Google

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed.

"She told me so," I insisted.

"Young man, I maintain that a lady cannot lie; but it ain't always best to believe her. You didn't expect that she was goin' to toss her heart into your lap at the first bid, did ye? They don't do that, not if they 're real cunnin'. They like to hang on to their hearts an' make ye bid for 'em. They want to know how much you'll give; and they're right, absolutely right. It's good business. A girl has to be won."

I sat in a thoughtful silence, and Smead went on.

"It's a kind of auction sale. 'How much am I bid?' the girl says with her eyes. You say, 'I offer my love.' It isn't enough. You offer houses an' lands. Still she shakes her head no. By an' by you speak up with a brave voice, an' offer the strong heart of a hero an' a love as deep an' boundless as the sea, an' you mean every word of it. That fetches her. You see, love is

Digitized by Google

the biggest thing in a woman's life—or in the world, for that matter. So you've got to say it big an' mean it big. Feeble words an' manners won't do when you're tellin' the best girl in the world how ye love her. Now, you've got the goods—the hero's heart an' all. Why don't ye offer 'em?"

I wish I had told him why, but I did not. In the first place, I knew that I was no hero; and, again, I was like most Yankee boys of that time—I could not bear any tempting of my heart's history. It was full of deep sentiment, but somehow that was awfully sacred to me. Then, too, I was not much of a talker. I could not have said those pretty things to Florence. My words had never been cheapened by overuse, and I had quit lying, and any sort of hyperbole would have made me ashamed of myself.

I decided to leave school soon, and go to New York to seek my fortune. So I should have done but for my next adventure.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

THERE were days when there was a mighty ferment in the systems of Griggsby.

On a gray, chilly Saturday in the early autumn the village was full of farmer folk who had come to market their produce. With these people and the mill hands, Saturday was apt to be a busy day, with all doors open until eight or nine o'clock. Most of the farmers went home in good order after their selling and buying. Some, however, proceeded to squander the proceeds and went home reeling in their wagons, with horses running and lathering under the whip.

Late in the afternoon Henry Dunbar and I were walking down the main street when

Digitized by Google

we saw a crowd gathering and heard an outburst of drunken profanity. We ran with the crowd, which was surrounding the town bully, a giant blacksmith, of the name of Josh, noted for his great strength and thunderous voice, and a farmer from an Irish neighborhood above the village. Both had been drinking, and the blacksmith was berating the farmer. We mounted a wagon that stood near, where we could see and hear. The blacksmith had rolled up his right shirt sleeve to the shoulder, and stood with his huge arm raised as the foul thunder of his wrath broke the peace of the village.

The farmer rushed in, striking with both fists. Josh seized him about the shoulders, and the two wrestled for a moment, then fell, the farmer underneath. Josh held him by his hair and ears, and was banging his head on the stone pavement. It was now like a fight between bulldogs; blood was flowing. The farmer had the blacksmith's thumb between his teeth, and the latter was

Digitized by Google

roaring with pain. There were loud cries of "Stop it!" Two bystanders were tugging at the great shoulders of Josh.

Henry and I leaped from the wagon, pushed our way through the crowd, and, seizing the blacksmith by his collar, broke their holds with a quick pull and brought Josh's neck to the ground. The farmer was surrounded and pushed away, while the mighty Josh made for me. I was minded to run away, but how could I, after all that Smead had said to me? I expected to be killed, but I could not run away. So I did a thing no man had ever done before when the great Josh was coming. I ran straight at the giant and, as I met him, delivered a blow, behind which was the weight and impulse of my body, full in the face of that redoubtable man. It was like the stroke of a hundred-and-sixty-pound sledge hammer. The man toppled backward and fell into a cellarway, head foremost, burst the door at the foot of the

Digitized by Google

stairs, and stopped senseless on the threshold of a butcher's shop. It was a notable fall, that of this town bully, and his pristine eminence was never wholly recovered. Henry, too, was set upon by rowdy partisans, and was defending himself when the town constable reached the battlefield and arrested Josh and the farmer and me for a breach of the peace. But the incident was not closed.

Friends of the fighters began to discuss the merits of the men and their quarrel in the bar-rooms and stable yards of Griggsby. Feeling ran high, and there was noisy brawling in the streets.

Soon after nightfall a fight began in a bar-room between the two factions represented by farmer boys and horse-rubbers, and was carried into the back yard; and while it lasted one young man was kicked in the chest until he was nearly dead. Word ran through the town that a murder had been committed. The Websterian age

Digitized by Google

of Griggsby had come to its climax, and naturally.

Next day Henry was arrested for his part in the affray. His father, who happened to be in Boston at the time, was summoned by a telegram from Florence. He came, and the result of his coming was the purchase of *The Little Corporal* for his daughter. I sat with him and his son and daughter when Dan'l Webster Smead told him the story of that day with the insight of a true philosopher.

"The old town is in a bad way," said Dunbar, when the story was finished.

"But it can be set right," said Smead, "an' you're the man to do it."

"How?"

"Buy *The Little Corporal* for your daughter, an' we'll do the rest," said Smead.

Mr. Dunbar shook his head. "I'd rather she'd marry some fine young fellow and settle down," said he.

"What's the matter with her doin' both?" Smead asked.

Digitized by Google

"Give me the *Corporal*, and I'll attend to the young fellow," said Florence.

"Well, if you'll agree to help her in both enterprises," said Dunbar to Smead, "I'll buy the paper. But you and Havelock must agree to help with the newspaper, and make no important contracts without my consent."

So I agreed to work for the *Corporal*, and changed my plan of leaving Griggsby.

Immediately I began to suffer an ill-earned and unwelcome adulation. The Dan'l Websters touched their hats when I passed, and one likened me to Achilles; small boys followed me in the streets and gazed into my face. Fortunately, my alleged crimes were soon forgotten. That is one curious thing about the Yankees: they will use a lie for conversational purposes, but they never believe it. They rarely love a man until they have taken him apart and put him together again by the surgery of conversation. They want to know how he stands it.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

GOOD food, and plenty of it, was required to maintain the talents for leisure, racing, and Websterian grandeur that distinguished the men of Griggsby. As a rule, the women, therefore, were overworked. Men who could not afford the grandeur or the sport indulged in dreams of it, and surrendered their lives to inelegant leisure. Some left their farms and moved into the village to make Dan'l Websters of their sons. Some talked of going West, where the opportunities were better. You could hear men in blue denim dreaming of wealth on the pavements and cracker barrels of Griggsby, while their wives battled with poverty at home.

Wifehood was still a form of bondage,

Digitized by Google

as it was bound to be among a people who for generations had spent every Sabbath and the beginning and the end of every other day with Abraham and his descendants. Their ideals and their duties were from three to four thousand years apart—so far apart that they seldom got acquainted with one another. Among the highest of their ideals was Ruth, of the country of Moab. Did she not touch her face to the ground to find favor with the man she loved? Did she not glean in the fields till even, and thresh out her bundles, and then lie down at the feet of Boaz?

In love and fear the wives of the Yankees were always gleaning. They found a certain joy in trouble. Sorrow was a form of dissipation to many, disappointment a welcome means of grace, and weariness a comforting sign of duty done. Their fears were an ever-present trouble in time of need. They were three—idleness, God, and the poorhouse. Whatever the men might do

Digitized by Google

or fail to do in Griggsby, it was the part of the women to work and save. They squandered to save; squandered their abundant strength to save the earnings of the family, the souls of husbands, sons, and daughters, the lives of the sick. If ever they thought of themselves it was in secret. Their hands were never idle.

The Yankee was often an orator to his own wife at least, and had convinced his little audience of one of two things, either that he had achieved greatness or was soon to be crowned. The lures of politics, invention, horsemanship, speculation, religion, and even poesy, led their victims from the ax and the plow. In certain homes you found soft-handed, horny-hearted tyrants of vast hope and good nature, and one or more slaves in calico. In my humble opinion, these willing slaves suffered from injustice more profound than did their dark-skinned sisters of the South.

You might see a judge or a statesman

Digitized by Google

strutting in purple and fine linen, or exchanging compliments in noble rhetoric at a mahogany bar, while his aproned wife, with bare arms, was hard at work in the kitchen, trying to save the expense of a second hired girl. And you would find her immensely proud of her rhetorical peacock. His drinking and his maudlin conduct were often excused as the sad but inevitable accessories of Websterian genius.

But the Websterian impulse had begun to show itself in a new generation of women. It flowered in resounding rhetoric.

Now and then Florence Dunbar called at the home of the Smeads, and had learned to enjoy the jests of Dan'l, and especially his talk about social conditions in Griggsby. It was there that she got the notion of buying the *Corporal* and hiring Smead to help her reform the place.

One evening a number of my schoolmates were asked to meet the daughters of Smead,

Digitized by Google

who had attended the normal school before going out to teach.

"Ruth, won't you get up and give us a piece?" Mrs. Smead asked one of her daughters.

"Mince, apple, or pumpkin, mother?" Dan'l W. inquired, playfully.

"Oh, stop your joking!" said Mrs. Smead.

The young lady stepped to the middle of the floor, after the fashion of Charlotte Cushman in the sleep-walking scene of "Lady Macbeth." She gave us Warren's "Address," trilling her (r's) and pronouncing "my" like "me."

"There's the makin' of another D. W.," said Smead, soberly.

Ruth did not get the point, and he went on. "She makes the boys and girls roar like cottage organs up there at the red schoolhouse. They know how to work every stop in the organ, too—patriotic defiance, king hatred, sorrow, despair, torpid liver, pious rant. They need two more stops on the organ, humor and sanity."

Digitized by Google

Betsey, the younger sister of Ruth, would not speak "a piece," and I was glad of it. She sat by me and modestly told of her work, and now and then gave me a look out of her lovely blue eyes that would have moved the heart of a stone. What a mouth and face she had, what a fair, full, soft crown of hair! What a slim, inviting waist! And I liked her; that is the most I can say of it. Soc Potter, another schoolmate of those days, was said to be in love with her and to have the inside track.

Two other young ladies possessed by the demon of elocution shook out a few faded rags of literature with noble gestures and high-flavored tones. Yet these ladies of Griggsby were content with the intoxication of whirling words, while their husbands, sons, and brothers indulged in feelings of grandeur not so easily supported. But I do not wish you to forget that the women were always busy. If it had not been for them Griggsby would long ago have perished

Digitized by Google

of dignity and indolence, or of that trouble which the Germans call *katzenjammer*.

To sum up, the women stood for industry, the men sat down for it; the women worked for decency, and every man recommended it to his neighbor. But the women had no voice in the government of the town.

A year had passed since Ralph's departure. For months no word from him had come to me, or to Florence, as she informed me.

"I'm very sorry," I said, as we were walking together.

"I'm afraid I'm not," she surprised me by saying.

I turned and looked into her eyes.

"For a long time I've been trying to make a hero of Ralph, but it's hard work," she went on; "I fear it's impossible."

"Why?"

"He doesn't help me a bit; he doesn't give me any material to work with."

Digitized by Google

There was a moment of silence, in which the girl seemed to be trying to hold her poise. Then she added.

"Either he doesn't care or he is very easily fooled."

I said nothing, but I heartily agreed with her.

Congress had adjourned, and the Colonel had returned to his native haunts with all his Websterian accessories. There were moral weather prophets in Griggsby who used to say, when the Colonel came back, that they could tell whether it was going to be a wet or a dry summer by the color of his nose and the set of his high hat. "Wet" was now the general verdict as he strode down the main street swinging his gold-headed cane.

On a lovely May day I tramped off into the country to attend Betsey Smead's last day of school and to walk home with her. The latter was the main part of it. She was glad to see me, and I enjoyed the children,

Digitized by Google

and the songs of the birds in the maples of the old schoolyard.

In the middle of the afternoon a stern-faced old man with a hickory cane in his hand entered the schoolhouse, and Betsey hurried to meet and kiss him. Then she helped him to a seat at the teacher's desk. He was stoutly built, and wore a high collar, a black stock, and a suit of faded brown. There was a fringe of iron-gray hair above his ears, with tufts of the same color in front of them. The rest of his rugged, deep-lined face was as bare as the top of his head. His stern, gray eyes quizzically regarded the girl and the pupils.

"Describe the course of the Connecticut River," he demanded of a member of the geography class.

To my joy, the frightened girl answered correctly.

"Very well, very well," said he, loudly, as though it were a matter of small credit, after all.

Digitized by Google

A member of the first class in arithmetic was not so fortunate. To him he put a problem.

"Go to the blackboard," the old gentleman commanded. "A man had three sons —put down three, if you please.

"To A he willed half his property, to B a quarter, and to C a sixth. Now, his property consisted of eleven sheep. The sons wished to divide the sheep without killing any, so they consulted a neighbor. The neighbor came with one of his own sheep and put it in with the eleven, making twelve in all. Then he gave one-half to A, making six; one-quarter to B, making three; one-sixth to C, making two—a total of eleven—and drove back his own sheep. Now, tell me, young man, what is the matter with that problem—tell me at once, sir."

The boy trembled, looked stupidly at the blackboard, and gave up.

"Huh! that will do," snapped the old gentleman.

Digitized by Google

Here was the grand, stentorian method applied to geography and mathematics.

At last school was dismissed. The tears of the children as they parted with Betsey seemed to please the old gentleman. His face softened a little.

"Ah, you'll make a good mother, Betsey," he said, rather snappishly, as he came down from his seat, drawing his breath at the proper places of punctuation and touching his right leg as though he had a pain in it. "Do ye know how to work, eh?"

"I've always had to work," said Betsey.

"That's good, that's good!" the old man exclaimed. "Your grandmother was a good woman to work."

"Grandfather, this is Mr. Havelock," said Betsey, as she presented me.

"How d' do?" snapped the old gentleman, looking sharply into my face. Then he turned to Betsey and said: "Don't be in a hurry to get married. There are plenty of fish in the sea, girl—plenty of

Digitized by Google

fish. Huh! Tell your father that I am very much pleased with the last news of him—very much pleased; but I shall not trust him again—never, nor any of them except you."

A man was waiting for him in a buggy outside the door. I withdrew a little, and waited while Betsey spoke with the old gentleman. The girl joined me as her grandfather drove away, and together we walked down the hills to Griggsby, that lovely afternoon of the early summer. We talked of many things, and always when I have thought of that hour I have heard the hum of new life in ponds and marshes and seen the light of a day's end glowing on windows, woods, and hills, and felt the joy of youth again.

"You are a friend of Florence Dunbar," said Betsey, as we were crossing a field. "She has told me lots about you."

"I fear that I'm not much of a success either as a subject or a predicate," I said.

Digitized by Google

"She thinks you are a great hero, and there are others who think it, too."

I blushed and stumbled a little in trying to say:

"Well—it—it isn't my fault. I've—I've done my best to—to keep her from making any mistake."

"We've been hoping that you and she would make a match," the little school teacher went on.

"It's—it's impossible," I said, bitterly.

"Impossible? Why?"

"Well, she—she feels so horribly grateful to me that—that if I asked her to be my wife, I—I suppose she would think it her duty to say yes."

Betsey laughed, and we walked along in silence for half a minute. Then she stopped, and her glowing eyes looked into mine as she said, very soberly:

"Havelock, you're a strange boy. I don't want to spoil you, but I think—well, I won't say what I think."

Digitized by Google

So I never knew what she thought, but I well remember there were tears in her eyes and mine as we walked in silence. She was the first to speak.

"If Florence said yes, it would be because she loves you," said Betsey.

"But you do not know all that I know," was my answer.

"I want to be decently modest, but I know some things that you do not," she declared.

Then, as if she dared go no further in that direction, she timidly veered about.

"I believe you are acquainted with Socrates Potter?"

"Yes, and I like him. He can say such funny things."

"Sometimes I fear that he hasn't a serious thought in his head."

"Oh yes! He has at least one," I said.

"Well, I should like to know what it is."

"His thought of you."

She blushed and looked away, and I

Digitized by Google

could see that she was in quite a flutter of excitement.

Oh, what a day was that, and—we were in its last moments!

We were nearing the village, and had begun to meet people, and, while we had a little distance to go, our serious talk went no further.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

GRADUATION day had arrived, when Florence was to complete her course at the academy. The best women, as though by general agreement, had combined to right the wrong done her. No girl so noble and splendid had ever stood on the platform of the old academy. She was the valedictorian. Her gown was white, her voice music, while her form and face would have delighted a sculptor. That very day she assumed control of *The Little Corporal*, and began her work, with Dan'l Webster Smead as associate editor.

The first issue of the paper under its new management had an editorial to this effect:

Things are going to happen in Griggsby—things that have never happened before in Griggsby or

Digitized by Google

elsewhere. We have a large, distinguished, and growing list of drunkards whose careers thus far have suffered from neglect, concealment, and a general lack of appreciation.

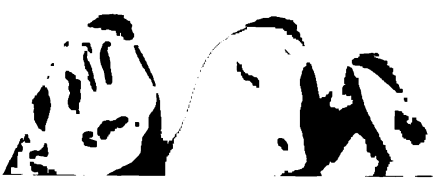
> Full many a brawl of purest ray serene
> The dark, unfathomed depths of Griggsby bear;
> Full many a spree is born to blush unseen
> And waste its fragrance on the midnight air.

It shall be so no longer. We propose to fathom the depths. Hereafter the adventures of our merry gentlemen shall be duly chronicled, so that the public may share their joy and give them credit according to their deserts.

We have a number of idlers and gamblers in Griggsby whose exploits have also been shrouded in obscurity. They, too, may rejoice that at last full justice is to be accorded them in this paper, so that their winning and losing shall no longer be a subject of inaccurate knowledge. Some are blamed who ought not to be blamed, and some are not blamed who ought to be blamed, and there is no health in the present situation.

We have a large number of young men who are looking to their elders for an example worthy of emulation. *The Little Corporal* will let its light shine hereafter upon the example set by the elder generation of Griggsby, to the end that none of it may be lost.

We have seven saloons and three drug stores that



Digitized by Google

have violated the law with notable and unnoted persistence. They, too, may be assured that their achievements will no longer be overlooked.

But the biggest thing we have in Griggsby is a *conscience*. That, too, may rejoice that its findings are no longer to be unknown and neglected. It shall be busy night and day, and its approval shall be recorded with joy and its condemnations with deep regret in the *Corporal*. But both shall be duly signalized and set forth.

It is recorded of Napoleon, who was himself known as the Little Corporal, that one night, having found a sentinel asleep at his post, he took the weapon of the latter and stood guard for him until he awoke. That this paper will try to do for the conscience of Griggsby, when it is weary and overworked.

Well, things did begin to happen in Griggsby. The Mutual Adulation Company that had paid its daily dividends in compliments and good wishes at the bar of the Palace Hotel went out of business. The souls of the leading citizens ceased to flow. The babbling brooks of flattery ran dry.

Among other items this appeared in the next number of the *Corporal:*

Digitized by Google

THE TURNING OF GRIGGSBY

Jerry McMann attacked his horse in the street the other day, and without any provocation that the bystanders could observe beat him over the head with the butt of his whip, for which he has had to pay the utterly inadequate fine of five dollars. The *Corporal* hereby adds to his fine the distinction which his act has won. This beater of a helpless animal is probably the most brutal man in the township, and the most arrant coward.

The Little Corporal passed from hand to hand, and waves of joy and consternation swept over the community. Thoughtful and worried looks gathered under the hats of silk and beaver. Colonel Buckstone smote the bar of the Palace Hotel and roared about the "Magna Charta of our Liberties," as he viewed his image in a mirror among the outlines of a bird drawn in soap.

Now, there lived in the village of Griggsby a certain lawyer of the name of Pike—G. Washington Pike. He was the most magnificent human being in that part of the country. He shone every day in broad-

Digitized by Google

cloth, a tall beaver hat, and a stock and collar. He greeted one with a low bow and a sweeping gesture of the right hand, and said "Good morning" as though it were a solemn and eternal verity. His distinguished presence graced every public occasion, and he was made up as the living image of Dan'l Webster. At one time or another many who lived in the village had been nudged by visitors from a distance and asked: "Who is that grand-looking man?" It was a query not so easy to answer. He was a lawyer without visible clients, whose wife was the leading dressmaker of Griggsby.

I was sitting in the office of the *Corporal* with Smead when the great man entered, bowed low, and cut a scroll in the air with his right hand.

"Good morning, Editor Smead," said he, oratorically.

"Good morning, Mr. Pike," was the greeting of Smead.

Digitized by Google

"On this occasion it is *Lawyer* Pike, who presents his compliments to *Editor* Smead, and begs to confer with him on a matter of business," said the great man.

"Go ahead, *Lawyer* Pike," said the editor.

"While *Mr.* Pike has the highest personal regard for *Mr.* Smead, *Lawyer* Pike takes issue with *Editor* Smead in behalf of his client, Mr. Jeremiah McMann, and demands a retraction of certain words in the *Corporal* of last week, calculated to injure the reputation of said McMann."

Then the great Dan'l said:

"*Editor* Smead refuses the request of *Lawyer* Pike, and suggests that he and horse-killer McMann should join hands and jump into the air as high as possible."

And so ended the first bluff in the new life of Griggsby.

A great public meeting was held in the town hall in support of the candidacy of Colonel Buckstone for the post of consul

Digitized by Google

"*EDITOR* SMEAD REFUSES THE REQUEST OF *LAWYER* PIKE, AND SUGGESTS THAT HE AND HORSE-KILLER McMANN SHOULD JOIN HANDS AND JUMP INTO THE AIR AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE"

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

at Hongkong. The merchant princes and Daniel Websters, representing the beauty and fashion of Griggsby, the women, representing its industry and sturdy virtue, were on hand. So were many mill-workers and students from the old academy.

Judge Warner was chosen to preside, and opened the meeting with sober, well-chosen words. Then followed a great and memorable tournament of the D. W.'s. Floods of impassioned eloquence swept over the crowd and out of the open windows, and at every impressive pause we could hear birds chattering as they slipped from their perches in the treetops that overhung the eaves.

The great Bill Smithers was telling of the poor, barefooted boy who came down from the hills long ago and bade fair to rise to the highest pinnacle of statesmanship.

Among other things he said: "Think of this poor boy, who used to feed the chickens and milk the patient cow. Since then he

Digitized by Google

has fed the multitude of his fellow-citizens with political wisdom and milked the great Republic for their benefit."

He soared and roared in praise of the manly virtues of the Colonel.

A stray cow began to bellow in the streets. Mr. Smithers, who was speaking, paused to inquire if some one would please stop that beast.

A voice in the gallery shouted, "Give the cow a chance." Another said, "It's the cow that Sile milked." The crowd began to laugh, and the situation was critical; but, fortunately, the emotions of the cow subsided.

The Rev. Sam Shackleford turned himself into a human earthquake, and tears rolled down his face while he told of the great talents and the noble heart of his distinguished fellow-townsman.

In due time Colonel Buckstone rose to acknowledge the kindness of his fellow-citizens. He spoke of the affairs of his

Digitized by Google

native town, and presently referred to the newspaper, which had always been a power for good in the village. He hoped that it would continue to be so, but had his fears. A certain editorial had already injured the fair fame of Griggsby. There was not a scintilla of evidence in support of its veiled and open charges, not one. He challenged Mr. D. W. Smead to prove that Griggsby was any worse than other communities.

In the name of Heaven, what new assault was to be made upon the Magna Charta of our liberties, secured by the blood of our fathers? He would defend it. He served notice then and there that he would pour out his life's blood, if need be, rather than see the liberties of the citizens of Griggsby abated by one jot or tittle. No, he would rather see his right arm severed from his body.

That dear old Magna Charta was often on his lips. Indeed, the chart of his liberties was so great and so threatening that

Digitized by Google

Moses and the prophets had to get out of its way. Every day he referred to "jots and tittles" of abatement and absent "scintillas of evidence."

He closed his address with this Websterian peroration:

"When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may they not see him shining on the enslaved citizens of my native town. Rather let their last feeble and lingering glance behold them eating and drinking according to their needs and wishes, and in the full enjoyment of every blessing that the Almighty has showered upon us."

These sentiments met with noisy approval. How often the eyes of the great man were "turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven"!

There was a call for Dan'l W. Smead.

Mr. Smead rose from his seat in the audience, went to the platform, and said:

"I feel like Pompeii after the great

Digitized by Google

eruption of seventy-nine A.D. I am overwhelmed, but I propose to dig myself up and continue in business. First, let me say that I am glad that Colonel Buckstone is likely to enter the missionary field an' show the Christian virtues of New England to the heathen of the Orient. I have long thought that it was a good thing for him to do—a good thing for anybody to do. In my opinion, the Colonel would soon take the conceit out of those foreign heathen. But we need him here. We do not wish him to be plucked from the garden of Griggsby. What, I ask you, what is to become of our own heathen if he is removed from among them? Have not the press an' the pulpit already threatened their sacred liberties? Who would remind us of those jots and tittles of abatement, of those absent scintillas of evidence? It is too bad that the palladium of our oratory is threatened. It must not be. Think of the feelings of the sun in heaven if he were not again to be

Digitized by Google

beheld for the last time in the village of Griggsby! Of course, there are other villages, but let it never be said that we have fallen behind them.

"When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on a bereft an' joyful Griggsby; on citizens who have ceased to weep except for sorrow, whose tears have gone dry because the village pumps of oratory have failed them. God forbid that I should behold him shining upon men of genius in bondage or in exile! Rather let their last feeble and lingering glance see those citizens eating and drinking, according to their needs and wishes, at the Palace Hotel, while their wives are at work, according to their habit, in the kitchen and the laundry."

For a moment he was silenced by a storm of laughter.

It was a death blow to the Dan'l Websters of Griggsby. Those hardened criminals of the rostrum, who had long been robbing

Digitized by Google

the people of their tears, had themselves been touched. Their consciences were awakened. They tumbled and fell.

Bill Smithers, who had so highly praised his friend the Colonel on the stage, said to a fellow-citizen after he had left the hall, "Well, after all is said and done, what a d——d pirate Buckstone is!"

That shows how sincere, how heartfelt was the loud-sounding oratory of that time.

Next day a stern and sorrowful silence fell upon Colonel Buckstone. It boomed like an empty barrel at the slightest touch. Judge Brooks ventured to ask him what was the matter. He smote the air with his fist, muttered an oath, checked himself, shook his head, and said, in a tone worthy of Edwin Forrest:

"The evil days have come, sir. I tremble for Griggsby."

Then he sadly strode away.

Now, that morning, Colonel Buckstone had received a letter from the able editor

Digitized by Google

of the *Corporal*, in circumstances fraught with some peril to myself. The letter ran about as follows:

MY DEAR COLONEL,—I have undertaken to improve the morals of Griggsby, and as a first step I shall insist upon your retirement from public life. I inclose the proof of an article, now in type in this office, in which, as you will observe, is a full and accurate review of your career. In my opinion, this justifies my demand that forthwith you resign your seat in Congress. If you fail to do so within one week from date, I shall submit this article to the judgment of the electors of the district; but I should like, if possible, to spare your family the pain of that process. I can only leave you to choose between voluntary and enforced retirement, with some unnecessary disgrace attending the latter. I am sending this by Mr. Havelock, who is instructed to deliver it to you, and only to you.

Yours truly,

FLORENCE DUNBAR.

I had gone to work in the office of *The Little Corporal*, and had delivered the message, of the nature of which I knew nothing. The Colonel tore the envelope, grew hot with rage, struck at me with his

Digitized by Google

cane, and shattered the Ninth Commandment with a cannon shot of profanity.

I wondered what it was all about, and promptly decided that the profession of journalism was too full of peril for me.

"Ha, blackmailer!" he shouted. "Child of iniquity, I will not slay you until you have taken my reply to your mistress, who is a disgrace to the name of woman. Say to her that if she publishes the article, a proof of which I have just read, I shall kill her, so help me God!"

Yes, it was a kind of blackmail, but how noble and how absolutely feminine.

When I returned to the Colonel's office I knew what I was doing. It was with a note which read as follows:

DEAR SIR,—This is to advise you, first, that you cannot change my purpose with cheap and vulgar threats; second, that resignation would be an easier means of retirement, and probably less painful, than a shooting-match with me.

Yours truly,

FLORENCE DUNBAR.

Digitized by Google

The old bluff mill of his brain, which had won many lawsuits and jack pots for the Colonel, had failed him for once. Its goods, the quality of which had never been disputed, were now declared cheap and vulgar.

He was comparatively calm until he had finished reading the note, when the storm broke out again, and I fled before it.

Well, next day a note of surprising politeness came from the Colonel. It apologized for the haste and heat of his former message, and requested an interview. Miss Dunbar was quick to grant his request, demanding that the interview occur in her office, and in the presence of a witness of her choosing, who could be trusted to divulge no part of the conversation. The interview took place, and I was the chosen witness.

The Colonel was calm under a look of injured innocence.

"Young woman," he began, "let us be brief. You have it in your power to ruin

Digitized by Google

me. That I admit, and only that, and ask what you want me to do."

"Resign," said she, firmly.

"Mademoiselle, I have been foolish," said the Colonel, "but my follies are those which, unfortunately, are shared by many of my sex. I ask you to consider my family and my long devotion to the interests of this community. If I resign with no apparent reason, what will my constituents say, who are now being asked to sign a petition in favor of my appointment to a consular position? My fondest hopes will be crushed."

Colonel Buckstone wiped his watery eyes with his handkerchief.

Miss Dunbar spoke out with courage and judgment.

"I don't want to be hard on you," she said. "There are two conditions which would induce me to modify my demand. The first is that you turn in and help us to improve the morals of this community."

Digitized by Google

"I have always labored in that cause," said the Colonel, with a righteous look.

"But you have succeeded in concealing your efforts," she said. "You are one of the leading citizens of Griggsby. All eyes are upon you. Your example has a tremendous influence on the young men of this village. Often you have a highly moral pair of lungs in your breast, but your heart does not seem to agree with them. A man is known by his conduct, and not by his words. By your conduct you teach the young men to buy and sell votes, to go on sprees, to drink and gamble in public places, to have little regard for the virtue and good name of woman."

Then a thing happened which gave me new hope of the Colonel. It was the first time that his jacket had been warmed, and it looked as though the fire of remorse had begun to burn a little.

"Young woman," he said, very solemnly, "if my humble example has been so mis-

Digitized by Google

understood, if my conduct has so belied the sentiments of my heart as to create such an impression in the mind of the observer, I will do anything in my power to make amends, and I will listen to any suggestions you are good enough to offer."

The suggestions were offered and accepted, and the sway of Buckstone was at its end.

"There is one other thing," said Miss Dunbar. "You have cruelly misjudged my character, and there is one thing I shall ask you to do."

"What is it?"

"That you join Ralph in Europe, and see that he returns all my letters within six weeks from date."

"It was my plan to join him for a needed rest," said the Colonel, "and you may be glad to know that I propose to bring him back with me."

"What you propose to do with him is a matter of no interest to me," said Florence. "I only demand the letters."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

I WAS discussing plans with Florence in her sanctum one afternoon, when she said to me:

"Uriel, you're a hummer. We can't get along without you. The advertising has doubled, and it's due mostly to your efforts. Please consider yourself married to this paper, and with no chance of divorce. I'll treble your salary."

"I couldn't help doing well with such a paper to work for," I said. "There's no credit due me."

"I don't agree with you. Of course, we've made a good paper. I thought it was about time that the women, who did most of the work, had a voice in the government of the village. Women have some rights, and

Digitized by Google

I think I've a right to know whether you still care for me or not."

"Florence, I love you more than ever," I said. I rose and stepped toward her, my face burning; and she quickly opened the gate of the railing, went behind it, and held me back with her hand.

"Havelock, you stupid thing!" said she. "What I want now is eloquence — real, Websterian eloquence, and plenty of it."

I stood like a fool, blushing to the roots of my hair, and she took pity on me.

"Bear in mind," said she, "that I am not the least bit grateful. I just naturally love you, sir; that's the truth about it."

Then my tongue was loosed. I do not remember what I said, but it was satisfactory to her, and right in the midst of it she unlocked the gate.

We were both crying in each other's arms when there came a rap at the door.

"One moment," she called, as we endeavored to dry our eyes, while she noisily

Digitized by Google

bustled about the room. Then she opened the door, and there stood Dan'l W. Smead.

"Come in," said she; "and don't mind my appearance. I have just listened to an address full of the most impassioned eloquence. It touched my heart."

Dan'l W. looked at us, smiled, and said with unerring insight, "I presume it was an address to the electors of his home district."

"It was," said she.

"Did his eyes behold for the last time the sun in heaven?"

"No, sir; they beheld it for the first time."

"And it shines brighter than ever before on land or sea," I added.

"He'll do," said Smead. "He has much to learn about the oratory and politics of love; but I move that he be elected by osculation."

"It has been accomplished," said Florence, as she covered her blushing face.

"But there were no tellers to record the vote," he insisted.

Digitized by Google

We voted again.

"God bless you both!" said Smead, with enthusiasm.

He kissed her, gave me a little hug, and added: "Her father told me what would happen, an' I believe he gave his consent in advance."

"He did," said Florence.

"Old boy, you've got a life job on your hands keepin' up with her. It suggests an editorial."

"How so?" Florence inquired.

"It will run about like this," Dan'l W. went on. "'The first occupation of man was keepin' up with Eve. She got tired of seein' him lie in the shade an' of hearin' him lie in the shade. So she contrived a situation in which it was necessary for him to get busy; she got him a job. It was no temporary thing; it was a real, permanent job. Many have tried to resign an' devote their lives to rum, eloquence, an' trottin'-hosses. We have seen the result in Griggs-

Digitized by Google

by. It is deplorable. *The Little Corporal* calls them back to their tasks.'"

We applauded his editorial.

"Oh, I could compose an Iliad, now that I know you're both happy," said he.

"Betsey did it!" Florence exclaimed. "She gave me courage."

"Poor Betsey!" said Dan'l W. "You know, her grandfather died a few weeks ago an' left her his fortune, an' she's dreadfully grieved about it because her beau, young Socrates Potter, has said that he would never marry a rich woman. The boys are gettin' awfully noble an' inhuman. I'm glad that Havelock has reformed."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

THAT was the end of the interview, and of the Websterian age in Griggsby. It still lives, the Websterian impulse; but, like many other things, it has gone West, although there are certain relics of it in every part of the land. Imaginary greatness now expresses itself in luxury instead of eloquence here in the East, and every community is in sore need of a Florence Dunbar.

Our citizens had begun to fear and respect *The Little Corporal.* Special officers with a commission from its editor paroled the streets. Our leading lights ceased to enter the public bar-rooms. Midnight brawls and revels were discontinued. The poker-players conducted their game with the

Digitized by Google

utmost secrecy and good order. The Young Men's Social Improvement League was organized. New justices of the peace were elected. The first time that Thurst Giles got drunk and beat his wife he was promptly put in jail at hard labor for a long term, while the man who had sold the whisky lost his license. A well-known and highly respected inn-keeper, at whose bar a minor had bought drinks, was compelled to give a bond against any repetition of the offense or take a bitter and ruinous draft of publicity.

Every week *The Little Corporal* swept over the town like a wholesome rain cloud, and refreshing showers of wit and lightning shafts of ridicule fell out of it, and the people laughed and thought and applauded. The poker sharp and the ten-dollar man were praised as philanthropists, while the "trot-tin'-hoss" and the rum-scented brand of Websterian dignity were riddled with good-natured wit, and people began to look askance at them. The perennial springs

Digitized by Google

of maudlin blasphemy and obscenity had begun to dry up, and their greatness had departed. The common drunkards moved out of the village. The resounding Websterian coterie took their grog in wholesome fear and the strictest privacy.

"How are you?" one was heard to ask another on the street.

"Sir, I am well, but distressfully sober," said the man addressed.

At fair-time the half-mile track was used only for a big athletic meet, in which every large school in the county was represented. A company of the best metropolitan players amused the people in a large, open amphitheater, for which money had been raised by subscription. A quartette from Boston sang between the acts. The grounds were well policed; everything was done decently and in order. The citizens of Griggsby and its countryside found enlightenment and inspiration at the fair. Every exhibit of drunkenness went to jail as swiftly as a

Digitized by Google

team of horses and ample help could take him there. The trotting farce was abolished, and the ten-dollar man was out of employment, and no longer the observed of all observers. That living fountain of blasphemy and tobacco juice wandered among the cattle sheds and said the fair was a failure, and went home heartsick and robbed of adulation. And a mere slip of a girl had accomplished all this!

Ralph Buckstone returned by and by, the harbinger of a new era. He was like the wooden horse of the Greeks. He came full of enemies that hastened the fall of Griggsby. He brought in the cigarette. Through him the cocktail, the liqueur, and the cordial entered the gates and leading citizens of the village. They were welcomed without suspicion and with every evidence of regard.

In a short time the flowers of rhetoric began to wither and die. Compliments turned to groans. The leading citizens

Digitized by Google

were in trouble. One retired to Poland Springs, one to Arkansas, two to the old cemetery, and one to a nearer hell of indigestion in his own bed. Dan'l W. Smead had long since gone to his rest, with a name honored above all others in his own county; for, having accomplished our purpose, we sold the *Corporal* to the man who had done much to make it. I qualified for the bar, and we settled in New York, and our lives have been blessed with children, great happiness, and a fair degree of success.

Ralph left Griggsby, and broke down, and went a fast pace. I heard of him, now and then, in the next few years. He had gone into journalism in Boston, and it was rumored that he had made a handsome success. One day a friend of us both said to me:

"Ralph? Oh, he's getting on famously. He is a typical journalist; talks like the first deputy of the Creator, and regards all things with a knowing and indulgent tolerance."

Digitized by Google

Well, on a day in June twenty years after my marriage, I was in court in New York, conducting the defense of a millionaire in trouble. I was examining a witness when the proceedings were interrupted by the arraignment of a prisoner. The clerk read the charge; it was forgery, and the man was Ralph Buckstone. An officer explained that he was a gambler, and had never been arraigned before. Evidently, the prisoner had no defense, and pleaded guilty, as I expected.

Then the recorder said to him: "You understand, I presume, what is involved in the step you are taking? Have you consulted counsel?"

"There is no occasion for it," said Ralph. "At last I have decided to speak and live the truth. I am guilty. I have been a weak and foolish man, but what I have been, and what I am to be henceforth, all the world is welcome to know. In my life hereafter there shall be no concealment,

Digitized by Google

and I hope never again to be ashamed of the truth about me."

It was a great moment, and those were great words, simply and modestly spoken, and they were the very words of old Appleton Hall. Deep under the weeds, in the neglected soil of his spirit, the good seed had been lying all this long time. Now it had burst, and was taking root, as though it had needed only the heat of his trouble. The face of the old recorder shone with kindness; and I, remembering my promise and the teaching of the old schoolmaster, was on my feet in a second.

"Your Honor," I said, "I appear for the prisoner. There was a time long ago when he and I were boys together. In the battles of our youth I defended him, as I shall again. Since that far day I fear we have both erred and strayed from the paths we had hoped to follow, for I do not need to remind your Honor that life is full of things that trip and turn one from his course, or

Digitized by Google

how easy it is for men to lose their reckoning. But we are going to do better; we are firmly resolved, and to-day we ask you to help us. I promise full reparation to any who have suffered loss, through his conduct, in the matter charged, and a bond in any reasonable amount for his good behavior."

Then the tide turned for Ralph Buckstone. It is enough for me to say that he faced about and became an able and successful author.

Yes, there are still Daniel Websters in America, many of them; there are Griggses and Griggsbys; but our Griggsby is a changed town. The seats of leisure are now occupied by the ladies. They have suffered from the angel theory, and it is their own fault. They look like birds of paradise. I should like to see them give up sweetmeats and idleness, jewels and ethereal raiment, and rejoin the human ranks, not as slaves, but as real women, with a work

Digitized by Google

to do and with all the rights they may desire.

In a recent humorous account of the old Cadets of Temperance Ralph concluded with these words:

"My subsequent career is well known, but, alas, poor Havelock!"

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google